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A CENTURY OF MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSION THINKING, 1885-1984

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A CENTURY OF MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSION THINKING, 1885-1984

by

HANS KASDORF

submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

MISSIOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTOR: PROFESSOR D.J. BOSCH

JOINT PROMOTOR: PROFESSOR P.G. HIEBERT

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SUMMARY

After laying out the parameters of the study in the introductory chapter, I have sought to establish the ecclesiological legacy of the Mennonite Brethren within the sixteenth-century Anabaptist/Mennonite movement. This places the Brethren along with other Mennonite groups on the historical map of the Free Church tradition (Chapters 2-3).

Through centuries of persecution and oppression, the Mennonites dispersed to many countries of the world, including Russia. Here they developed an ethnoreligious orthodoxy, focusing more on institutional maintenance than on missionary outreach until the 1830s when spiritual renewal began to stir among dry bones. In the midst of that revival was born the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1860 (Chapters 4-5).

Inspired by their experience of new life in Christ and stimulated by Pietists, Moravians, and Baptists, the Brethren emerged as a vigorous missionary church, first in Russia, then also in America and other countries of the world. They have expressed their missionary zeal by preaching the gospel of Christ and serving people in need, at first spontaneously, then more intentionally. The price they paid was high, often that of a martyr witness, especially in Russia (Chapters 6-7).

In 1885, they began to form foreign mission structures. In the spirit of the times, the Brethren have engaged in home mission and foreign mission, Indian mission and Jewish mission, children's mission and city mission. In the course of a century they have missionarily expanded to twenty-seven countries, commissioned more than 800 missionaries, and have a current annual budget of over five million dollars (Chapters 6-9, 11).

The focus of this study is more a critical reflection of the philosophy than of the history of Mennonite Brethren mission. Since the Mennonite Brethren understand themselves as the Church in mission, I have sought to analyze their mission structures, their sustaining mission forces--such as denominational organizations, personnel and financial resources--as well as their theology, philosophy, and relationships of mission (Chapters 10-13).

The final chapter is an appraisal of achievements and a challenge for further studies.

"I declare that

A CENTURY OF MENNONITE BRETHREN

MISSION THINKING, 1885-1984

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references."

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PART FOUR

A Process:

Broadening Mission Horizons in America

Chapter 8

FORGING AN UNDERSTANDING OF MISSION

Introduction

The genesis of the Mennonite Brethren on the American continent goes back to their first exodus from Russia in 1874. They began settling on the prairie states of Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, the Dakotas, and soon thereafter in the province of Manitoba in central Canada. In subsequent decades, members of the Brüdergemeinde together with other Mennonites of the Kirchengemeinde spread both east and west to numerous other states and provinces. While the majority of the Kirchengemeinde from Russia joined the relatively young General Conference Mennonite Church in America, the Brüdergemeinde developed its independent ecclesiastical and missional structures and philosophy.

The first four decades of American MB mission coincided with the most fruitful years of mission in Russia. But new and unique programs evolved within the American context of religious toleration and cultural pluralism. That is why, as late as 1950, John H. Lohrenz could write with unabashed confidence:

> North America is the scene where the M.B. Church has had its greatest expansion and its largest numerical increase, where it has carried out its most important activities and where it has made its most valuable contributions toward Mennonite history, as well as to the whole Church of Christ.[1]

Incidentally, this statement reflects more the age of triumphalism than the era of partnership. The tension between the two modes of thinking affects grassroots mission mentality among the Mennonite Brethren to this day.

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[1] John H. Lohrenz, The Mennonite Brethren Church (Hillsboro, KS: The Board of Foreign Missions of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 1950), p. 61.

In order to capture the essence of MB mission thinking in America, I propose to focus on both internal and external forces--cultural, theological or historical--that have given shape to a century of MB mission theory in action. It will be useful to concentrate on: (a) the spirit of the times; (b) the Mennonite mission milieu; (c) existential missionary advantages; (d) ecumenicity after a century; (e) conceptual mission language; and (f) meaning of missions and mission.

In the Spirit of the Times

By the middle of the nineteenth century the North American continent had become the land of promise and prosperity, hope and happiness for millions of Europeans. Regardless of the reasons for leaving their homelands, many peoples--including the Mennonites--had found in America the realization of unfulfilled dreams and desires. Having lived under political oppression, economic deprivation, and religious restrictions at different times and places, the peoples were here free to create their own opportunities for life and labor consistent with their religious faith and ethical convictions. But freedom without built-in norms of interpersonal relationships and mutual accountability can easily lead to license, selfishness, and greed. Neither the Mennonites as a whole nor the Mennonite Brethren as a renewal movement have remained immune to the temptations inherent in a free society.

In all fairness to the historical record, however, it must be pointed out that the Mennonite people have experienced a growing awareness of a world in need beyond themselves, and a moral conviction that each generation must be stewards of a valuable or irreplaceable spiritual and temporal legacy. Such awareness has called them to their responsibilities as a people of God for mission in the world.

The late Georg Vicedom has shown that in the modern world during this time three distinct streams of mission, each with its own theological persuasion and missiological

focus, can be clearly identified.[2] The first consisted of the major denominational Protestant mission movement. Its origin goes back to William Carey (1761-1834) and the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society in London in 1792. But in subsequent years it was nurtured mainly in Lutheran Pietism with primary emphasis on the proclamation of the Word of God. Since this current was flowing within the ecclesiastical matrix, it was dependent on the church with an understanding of mission as "the path of the Gospel from the Church to the Church."[3]

The second stream had its ecclesiastical fountainhead in the London Missionary Society, established in 1795, and in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, founded in Boston in 1810. Theologically, this stream moved within the Reformed tradition with strong Calvinistic undercurrents. Its flow reached a climactic momentum under the social gospel movement in America and lasted until the merger of two currents, namely the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches in 1961.[4]

The third mission stream was that of the so-called "faith missions"; this movement began its course when Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) formed the China Inland Mission in 1965.[5]

While the first stream has emphasized primarily the preaching of the Word of God to build the church on earth, and the second current has sharply focused on social dimensions with a utopian view of establishing a just kingdom in this world, the third movement has historically poured its

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[2] Georg Vicedom, Actio Dei (München: Christian Kaiser, 1975), pp. 15, 17-20.

[3] Vicedom, Actio Dei, p. 16; cf. Johannes Dürr, Sendende und werdende Kirche in der Missionstheologie Gustav Warnecks (Basel: Basler Missionsbuchhandlung, 1947), p. 34.

[4] Vicedom, Actio Dei, pp. 24-26. For the history and theology of this stream see Walter Rauschenbusch, The Righteousness of the Kingdom, ed. Max L. Stackhouse (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), pp. 79-116; David J. Bosch, Witness to the World (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980), p. 212f.

[5] Vicedom, Actio Dei, pp. 16, 25-27, 30-46.

energies into proclamation of the gospel with the near-exclusive intent of converting souls for heaven. The nature of mission as emphasized by each group in isolation is weak and hardly compatible with the nature of the New Testament gospel. In the first group there was a "duplicating gospel"--from church to church;[6] in the second movement, there was a "diluted gospel"--mainly for social needs;[7] in the third instance, there was an "emaciated gospel"--primarily concerned with spiritual needs.[8] Yet all of these nineteenth-century movements had one common denominator: they operated in the climate of Western colonialism and paternalism.[9]

This was the spirit of the times and of Protestant mission when the Mennonites in general, and the American Mennonite Brethren in particular, learned to walk the missionary road across the globe. The path was not without rich assets. A host of markers on the way pointed in the right direction. But neither was it without grave risks. Unforeseen hazards on the road ahead demanded mature discernment if devastating pitfalls were to be avoided.

The Mennonite Mission Milieu

The missionary spirit of the last century touched the Mennonite denominations only towards the end of the century. At that time a Mennonite mission renaissance took place, so that the Mennonite Brethren found themselves in good fraternal company.[10] This spirit coincided historically with the evangelical missionary fervor which reached unprecedented

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[6] Vicedom, Actio Dei, pp. 15, 17-20.

[7] Bosch, Witness, p. 212f.

[8] Bosch, Witness, p. 203f.

[9] Stephen Neill, Colonialism and Missions (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), pp. 13-43.

[10] James C. Juhnke, A People in Mission: A History of General Conference Mennonite Overseas Missions (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1979), pp. 1-14. Theron F. Schlabach, Gospel versus Gospel: Mission and the Mennonite Church, 1863-1944. Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History No. 21 (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980), pp. 19-53.

intensity during the latter half of the great century of mission.[11]

Various Mennonite groups of Dutch, Swiss, and German origin had already lived in America for decades--some for more than 200 years--when the Mennonite Brethren and other Mennonite immigrants from Russia arrived on the scene.[12] None of them had thus far demonstrated any concrete sign of the missionary intention evident in the larger evangelical community. But things began to change. Renewal in mission touched the Mennonite spirit. A few highlights associated with dates and events will provide a quick historical orientation on the larger Mennonite missionary milieu in America.

Significant Events of 1860

The year 1860 marked three important events in Mennonite history germane to this study.

1. As I have shown in Chapter 5, a group of Mennonites seceded from the larger Mennonite body of churches during a revival movement in Russia to form the Mennonite Brethren Church. Wrongly or rightly, this group saw separation from institutional Mennonitism as the only way to restore the Anabaptist-Mennonite concept of the Believers' Church and to recapture a vision for world mission in the nineteenth century.

2. While the secession was taking place in Russia, individual Mennonite leaders and a few entire congregations with an ecumenical mindset were seeking to unite the Mennonites in America. They founded the General Conference Mennonite Church "with the dream of unifying all Mennonites in a common mission."[13] Yet most Mennonite congregations chose not to

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[11] Gustav Warneck, Warum ist das 19. Jahrhundert ein Missionsjahrhundert? (Gotha: Perthes, 1889).

[12] C. Henry Smith, The Story of the Mennonites, 4th rev. and enlarged ed. by Cornelius Krahn (Newton, KS: Mennonite Publishing Office, 1957), pp. 529f., 537, 548, 553f, 565, 631ff.

[13] Juhnke, A People in Mission, p. 18; Smith, Story, pp. 670-690.

join the General Conference at this time;[14] others decided to pioneer in mission on their own.[15]

3. In the same year, there also emerged on the American continent an exhilarating quickening of religious life and a "movement in mission which began in the ['Old'] Mennonite Church."[16] From all of this it is evident that the Sovereign Spirit of the Triune Lord was rekindling the missionary dynamic among various Mennonite groups in the United States of America, as he had done in Russia.

Missional Milestones of 1872

1. The Mennonite Brethren in Russia met for their first annual conference in 1872 "to discuss the affairs of the Kingdom of God."[17] At that same conference, they founded an Itinerant Preaching Committee and commissioned seven evangelists as their first missionaries in that land. Not many years later such leaders as Eduard Loeppke (Leppke), August Liebig, and Abraham Schellenberg moved from that setting in Russia to the American frontier, where a similar event took place.

2. In 1872 the General Conference Mennonite Church in America organized its first Board of Missions, which in 1880 sent its first "foreign" missionary couple beyond its own ethnic frontiers to serve among the Oklahoma Native Americans.[18] The work expanded to the Cheyenne and Hopi Indians. The linguistic accomplishments, ethnographies, and cultural collections of such great Mennonite missionaries as ethnologist Heinrich R. Voth and linguist Rudolpho Petter are today found in such prestigious places as the Natural History

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[14] Juhnke, A People in Mission, p. 7.

[15] Schlabach, Gospel Versus Gospel, pp. 28-29.

[16] Schlabach, Gospel Versus Gospel, pp. 9, 31.

[17] P. M. Friesen, The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789-1910, trans. from the German by J. B. Toews et al. (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978), p. 475.

[18] Juhnke, A People in Mission, p. v; cf. p. 9.

Museum in Chicago and the Smithsonian Institute in Washington.[19]

Happenings of 1874

This was again an eventful year for at least three Mennonite groups.

1. The Mennonite Brethren together with large numbers of the Kirchengemeinde transplanted Russian Mennonitism to America. They brought a distinct cultural dimension to the American Mennonite worldview, which thus far had its roots anchored exclusively in Western Europe without the Russian experience.

2. Members of the Kirchengemeinde under the mission-minded leadership of Heinrich H. Richert and his nephew Heinrich R. Voth joined the General Conference Mennonite Church, a move that proved to be mutually beneficial to the immigrants from Russia as well as to the General Conference Mennonites in America.[20]

3. The (Old) Mennonite Church benefitted least from the immigrants. Although there had been a time of religious and missionary quickening in 1860, this church now rejected the mission enthusiasm and spirit of revivalism which the newcomers brought from Russia. Not only did the Indiana Mennonite Conference view the immigrants with suspicion and anguish, it even excommunicated Daniel Brenneman, one of its own evangelists, who promoted ideas of conversion and renewal in the spirit of the immigrants.[21]

The Importance of 1885

This was a year of beginnings in mission endeavors for the larger Mennonite community.

1. While the Mennonite Brethren in Russia began serious dialogue with the Baptists about sending the Abraham Friesens

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[19] Smith, Story, p. 684. For an in-depth study of this work see the following articles in Mennonite Life 37 (June 1982): Margaret Dietzel Hillegass, "Rodolphe Petter: A Called Linguist," pp. 4-7, cf. pp. 8-13; Fred Eggan, "H. R. Voth: Ethnologist," pp. 14-19, cf. pp. 20-25.

[20] Juhnke, A People in Mission, pp. 7 and 9.

[21] Schlabach, Gospel Versus Gospel, p. 33.

as the firstfruit of MB missionaries to India, the Brethren in America took a bold leap forward by organizing a Committe zur Verwaltung der Heidenmissionscasse (sic), also known as Heidenmissionskomitee. This committee was a forerunner of the Komitee für aüßere Mission, appointed more than a decade later. Initially, this eight-member committee had the responsibility of administrating the foreign mission treasury which the Conference collected to support Baptist mission work in India and Africa.[22]

2. The first missionaries of the General Conference Mennonite Church working near Darlington, Oklahoma, among Arapaho tribes in Indian Territory found themselves in a "strange world of heathenism" that was culturally "light-years removed from any Mennonite home base." Although these American Indians were "living in heathen superstition" and "held and guided by Satan," they were nonetheless "claimed and loved by God."[23] Those were profound insights matching the evangelical spirit of the time.

3. While most of the (Old) Mennonite Churches were at this time still skeptical of mission work in cities and foreign lands, some churches in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania began to move beyond their own boundaries to missionize among ethnically non-Mennonite people by helping at least "one mountain group build a meeting house for its own and other denominations' use."[24] Thus the more open-minded element of the Mennonite Churches was closely watching other Mennonite groups missionize "among red people in America" and gradually felt less and less threatened when the

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[22] Beginning with 1883, the Conference published all its Convention proceedings in official reports, commonly referred to as General Conference Yearbooks, or simply, GCY, 1885, p. 12. The designation Heidenmissionskomitee or Gentile Mission Committee occurs for the first time in the 1891 Convention report, GCY, 1891, p. 24. Thereafter, the name of the committee and its equivalent appears in many different forms as I will show later in Table 4, Chapter 9.

[23] Juhnke, A People in Mission, p. 9.

[24] Schlabach, Gospel Versus Gospel, p. 30.

subject of mission was broached by its more radical leaders.[25]

Daring Steps of 1898

At least four Mennonite groups leaped forward in faith toward India.

1. The American Mennonite Brethren Church accepted the N. N. Hieberts as missionaries and charged the Committee for Foreign Mission to make preparations for their commissioning.[26]

2. At the same time, Rodolphe Petter, General Conference Mennonite missionary and eminent linguist among the Cheyenne Indians, was asking his church whether there was not "the longing of the heart to do more for the heathen" than had been done so far. Inspired by the enterprising Mennonite world traveler George Lambert, Petter challenged his fellow-church people to watch carefully the direction of the erst-while tiny mission stream which now "has become an uncontrol-lable river." Indeed, argued Petter with persuasive conviction, the stream now "has left its old bed and strides out toward India."[27]

3. The Mennonite Church was by now also en route to India. J. A. Ressler was one of the "quickened generation" who had not only experienced a personal conversion, but also rediscovered the sixteenth-century Anabaptist missionary vision. Had he only possessed an equal vision for costly discipleship, he could have carried out that vision. Yet he possessed contagious enthusiasm for mission, matching that of other young Christians anywhere in colonial times. His church elder found Ressler genuine enough to appoint him as leader of the Mennonite Church's first team of foreign missionaries.[28]

4. There were also the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren, a movement more akin to the Mennonite Brethren than any other Mennonite group, as I will show later in this chapter.

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[25] Schlabach, Gospel Versus Gospel, pp. 41-42.

[26] GCY, 1898, pp. 18-20.

[27] Juhnke, A People of Mission, p. 17.

[28] Schlabach, Gospel Versus Gospel, p. 44; cf. pp. 43-47.

Suffice it to say here that the Krimmer MB Church elected a mission committee at its conference sessions held in Jansen, Nebraska in 1898 and decided to send the Heinrich V. Wiebes to India. The committee was charged to oversee this venture and facilitate the departure of the Wiebes at the earliest possible date.[29]

Moved by Compassion in 1920

While various Mennonite churches developed their mission program independently of each other in the course of the twentieth century, the year 1920 marked a milestone in mutual cooperative compassion and concern for temporal world needs. This was the year when Mennonite groups dissolved the two existing service agencies known as the "Relief Committee of Mennonites of North America"[30] and the "Mennonite Colonization Board"[31] to create an even larger and more comprehensive organization for joint ministry, namely the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). P. C. Hiebert, a prominent Mennonite Brethren educator and church leader, played a key role in the founding and development of this worldwide service and relief agency. He was elected its first chairman and was destined to serve in that capacity for thirty-three years.[32]

The founding of MCC on July 7, 1920, was a response to

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[29] G. W. Peters, Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions (Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1984), p. 88.

[30] See Guy F. Hershberger, "Relief Work," Mennonite Encyclopedia, ed. Harold S. Bender et al., vol. 4 (Scottdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955-1959), pp. 284-291; cf. Harold S. Bender's article on "Mennonite Central Committee," Mennonite Encyclopedia, vol. 3, pp. 605, 609.

[31] J. M. Suderman, "Mennonite Colonization Board," Mennonite Encyclopedia, vol. 3, pp. 617-618; cf. article on "Mennonite Central Committee," pp. 605-609.

[32] Clarence Hiebert, "World Mission and Ministries of Compassion," in The Church in Mission: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to J. B. Toews, ed. A. J. Klassen (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature Mennonite Brethren Church, 1967), p. 349. For an excellent survey of MB interchurch relation and cooperation, see John A. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Prilgrims and Pioneers (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975), pp. 380-399.

"Macedonian call" from the oppressed and famine-stricken Mennonites in Russia with whom the American Mennonite Brethren, more than any other Mennonite group, had close filial, historical, and spiritual ties. In subsequent years MCC expanded its services to peoples in need around the world. In a special centennial report in 1960, a Mennonite Brethren leader reflected on the cooperative efforts of his denomination saying, "Together with other Mennonites we have been able to reach out to help many needy peoples and to witness of our faith to the world."[33]

Existential Missionary Advantages

The Mennonite Brethren in America had certain theological and missionary advantages over their sister church in Russia. Some of these had historical roots, while others were more existential in nature. In either case, they proved to be basic to the development of the church's mission thinking on the western side of the Atlantic.

A Movement Two Times Born

It is of critical importance to understand that the American Mennonite Brethren missionary thrust along with those of other Anabaptist-Mennonite groups was theologically anchored in what James C. Juhnke has referred to as "a twice-born movement."[34]

The point Juhnke makes about being twice-born is not specifically related to individuals, nor does it have exclusive reference to the Mennonite Brethren. His point is that the Holy Spirit first renewed the church, then also rekindled the fires of mission. The Mennonite Brethren had experienced both while still in Russia: the personal spiritual rebirth and the corporate missional rebirth. They brought both the

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[33] Walter Wiebe, Ed., A Century of Grace and Witness: The Mennonite Brethren Church (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Reference and Counsel of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 1960), p. 25.

[34] Juhnke, A People in Mission, p. 2.

idea of new life and a missionary vision for the world with them across the sea to the American frontier. But it was in America that these dynamics could be fully articulated, redirected if necessary, and implemented without any ecclesio-political restrictions whatsoever. And that is precisely what the Brethren set out to do.

A Legacy with a History

The Mennonite Brethren had the advantage of a historical heritage. Even though the MB Church was barely in its teens, it did have a history of both new life and mission. Thus when the first Mennonite Brethren immigrants from Russia settled on the American prairies in 1874, they already carried with them "a degree of spiritual freshness" and a "sense of missions."[35]

The Mennonite Brethren had already taken their first steps on the missionary journey together with their spiritual siblings of Russia. They simply kept on walking on the terrain they knew best, namely that of mission festivals and itinerant evangelism among Mennonite people. But the rising sun which they had seen in the orient was also illuminating their path in the occident, beckoning them to cross new mission frontiers in yonder regions. That is why they followed their Russian sister church's interest in India, as I will show later in more detail.

An Attitude of Gratitude

The Mennonite Brethren came to America with an inherent missionary quality of gratitude and joy.

First, they were grateful for the gift of salvation by God's grace. After all, they were a twice-born people. In addition to being "born of the flesh" they were "born of the Spirit" (John 3:5-8).

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[35] A. E. Janzen, "The Development of Missionary Dynamic Among American Mennonite Brethren," in The Church in Mission: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to J. B. Toews (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature Mennonite Brethren Church, 1967), p. 155.

Second, the brotherhood-type church was for them a first-generation reality; they were not yet weighed down by institutionalism. A deep sense of joy flowed out of such experience, manifesting itself in renewed attitudes, interpersonal relationships, and mutual responsibility in a covenant community of the Conference.

Third, God had also done a great thing in their midst by granting them assurance of salvation. That, too, was unique of Mennonite Brethren within the larger fold of Mennonite folk. This motivated the Brethren to express in concrete ways that there is salvation in the name of Jesus for the whole world. They wanted others to have what they themselves had found, namely that Jesus "will save His people from their sins" (Mt. 2:21) and give peace of mind and conscience. This was indeed good news, worthy to be told.

In Covenant for Mission

The first duly constituted and generally recognized Mennonite Brethren assembly of congregations in America convened at York, Nebraska, on October 18-20, 1879.[36] The meetings began with a love feast, continued as a mission festival, and concluded with business deliberations. At this convention the American Mennonite Brethren passed the resolution to be a missionary people. They set four specific objectives:

> (a) to gather weekly offerings for missions, (b) to send out an itinerant evangelist, (c) to elect a missions committee to administer funds, and (d) to appoint a brother to evangelize in the church communities of Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas and Manitoba.[37]

These goals were entirely in keeping with the commitment the founding fathers had made in Russia, namely to be an

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[36] There had been a prior meeting in Nebraska in 1878, attended by eleven brethren, four from Kansas and seven from Nebraska. Although the purpose had been to unite the scattered congregations into a single Conference, the meeting failed to get the support of the churches that were not represented. Cf. Lohrenz, Mennonite Brethren Church, p. 72. The first official MB Convention was held in 1879.

[37] Janzen, "Missionary Dynamic," pp. 156-157.

evangelistic and missionary people in the world with a strong focus on other Mennonite groups which had lost their spiritual dynamic, once so characteristic of the Anabaptist movement. Thus their own people within Mennonitism as an institution became one of the primary objectives of evangelism on the American frontier.

Ecumenicity After a Century

Two events of long-standing historical significance were highlighted at the 1960 Mennonite Brethren Centennial Convention in Reedley, California. Both had to do with improving relationships between Mennonite Brethren and other Mennonite bodies. One was the merging of two groups of mission-minded brethren; the other was an act of bridging between two groups of separated brethren.

A Merger for Joint Action

The merger of the Mennonite Brethren with the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren (KMB) was an event that has had a major impact on Mennonite Brethren mission in recent times. I made a brief reference to the Krimmer Brethren in an earlier note. But this is the time to elaborate on their story, particularly as it relates to Mennonite Brethren mission.

The KMB Church was born in the village of Annenfeld near Simferopol in the Crimea or Krim (hence "Krimmer") of South Russia, on September 21, 1869, only nine years after the Mennonite Brethren had seceded from the Kirchengemeinde in the Molotschna in 1860. The birth and development of the Krimmer were inseparably linked with their founding patriarch and pioneer leader, Jakob A. Wiebe (1836-1921). Wiebe continued to lead the group of about forty families even after their migration to America in 1874; he remained their shepherd well into the twentieth century.[38]

On the one hand, the KMB Church had inherited a good portion of the ultraconservative spirit so characteristic of

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[38] Cf. Heinrich Goerz, Die Mennonitischen Siedlungen der Krim (Winnipeg: Echo-Verlag, 1957), pp. 44-45.

the Kleine Gemeinde, from which the Krimmer separated on the issue of baptism in 1869.[39] On the other hand, the KMB Church followed the Mennonite Brethren in such cardinal theological and practical principles as (a) the final authority of the Bible as God's revealed Word for faith and practice; (b) conversion and the new birth as the indispensable experience for all who seek to live a new life in Christ; (c) a covenant commitment to God and to one another in the Believers' Church as the body of Christ; (d) a life of obedience and discipleship under Christ who is both Savior and Lord; and (e) a commitment to witness in world mission by being, telling, and doing.

At the Fiftieth Jubilee of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren in Bridgewater, South Dakota, Elder Wiebe spelled out the distinctives of his denomination. One trait he described as "support of home and foreign missions according to ability, in order to save lost men for eternal life."[40] Thus the secret of the relatively rapid growth of this small movement lay in the fact that "right from the beginning the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren manifested a great zeal in evangelism, winning people for Christ and organizing local congregations."[41]

While the General Conference Mennonites and the Mennonite Brethren were crossing their first ethnic mission frontiers toward the American Indians, the Krimmer Brethren opened their first crosscultural mission work in the Black community of Elk Park, North Carolina, as early as 1886.[42] Some decades later, they began aggressive foreign mission work in China (1901), in Mongolia (1922), and among the Campa Indians in Peru (1946). They also supported existing faith missions. When they officially joined forces with the Mennonite Brethren in 1960, the Krimmer listed missionary

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[39] Toews, History, p. 177.

[40] Toews, History, p. 178.

[41] Toews, History, p. 181.

[42] Toews, History, p. 187.

activities "in North Carolina, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela, Northwest Indies, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Belgian Congo [Zaire], Southern Rhodesia, India, Japan, and Germany."[43] Their work in China and Mongolia had been terminated in 1949.[44]

Because of their spiritual affinity in theology of salvation, ecclesiological principles, and missional commitment, the Mennonite Brethren and the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren began to collaborate in foreign mission work as early as 1945.[45] In the years following, the Mennonite Brethren, as the larger of the two bodies, took the initiative of inviting the Krimmer Brethren "to consider jointly the possibility of uniting . . . spiritual forces into one general conference for the sake of advancing the cause of Christ and for . . . mutual strengthening in the Lord."[46] The paradigm of unity expressed by the Lord's prayer in John 17 was the theological touchstone of the merger at the 1960 Mennonite Brethren Convention in Reedley. A special document prepared for the occasion by the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren concluded with these words:

> May our union here today result in our mutual encouragement, edification, and strengthening in the Lord and His work, and also be a real witness to the glory of Christ and His body before a lost and confused world to the end that many may turn to Christ in these last days.[47]

The Krimmer Brethren were less denominational and more ecumenical in spirit than the Mennonite Brethren had ever been. They were always heavily involved in intermission

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[43] Toews, History, p. 188. Cf. Reuben Dirks, "Two Became One: A Heritage," The Christian Leader, November 12, 1985, p.8.

[44] A. K. Wiens and Gertrude Wiens, Shadowed by the Great Wall (Hillsboro, KS: M.B. Publishing House, 1979). This book gives the full story of the KMB mission in China and Mongolia. See also my observations on the China Mennonite Mission Society in Chapter 12 of this study.

[45] Cf. GCY, 1945, p. 74. Peters points out that the Mennonite Brethren made overtures to the Krimmers to join the Mennonite Brethren Mission Union in 1900 (Foundations, p. 85).

[46] GCY, 1951, p. 123.

[47] GCY, 1960, p. 29. For the full record of the merger see pp. 27-29; cf. GCY, 1951, p. 123; and 1957, pp. 116-117.

ministries and only marginally in their own. At the time of the merger in 1960, the Krimmer had two retired missionaries and an active missionary force of thirty-four persons serving in ten countries under the Evangelical Alliance Mission, the Sudan Interior Mission, Missionary Aviation Fellowship, and the Mennonite Brethren. All of them were supported by the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference, but only twelve were actually working under their own mission board; five chose to affiliate with the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Conference.[48] While the status of these latter five missionaries had to be clarified at the time of the merger, the Mennonite Brethren assumed unconditional responsibility for the other thirty-one and thereby entered a cooperative relationship with intermission ministries. This was indeed an ecumenical move, as Paul Toews implies twenty-five years after the merger, saying: "The KMB-MB merger and the larger Mennonite ecumenical renaissance are part of the means by which Mennonites have revitalized their sense of particularity and sharpened their mission."[49]

A Gesture of Reconciliation

The 1960 Centennial Convention in Reedley registered another historical milestone. Although different in nature, it was no less significant in impact. The Convention became an occasion for Mennonite Brethren to pause for reflection, introspection, and penitence. It all began when Erland Waltner, president of the General Conference Mennonite Church, read an official statement of apology from his denomination addressed to the Mennonite Brethren assembled in Reedley. In this document Waltner expressed regrets that the 1860 separation of the Brüdergemeinde from the larger Kirchengemeinde in Russia had occasioned "many feelings, words, and deeds that were not brotherly." The Mennonite Brethren

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[48] GCY, 1960, p. 60.

[49] In an article, "The Long road to Union," Paul Toews tells the story of the KMB-MB merger twenty-five years later (The Christian Leader, November 12, 1985, p. 6).

responded by expressing regret for "our failings and weaknesses of the past." They added, "We are motivated by the spirit of love to ask forgiveness where we acted coldly and unbrotherly."[50]

It is difficult to assess in how far this formal gesture of reconciliation was a genuine expression of humility, confession, forgiveness, and healing. But there are signs pointing in the direction of a growing awareness for the need of joint action in peace witness and for cooperation in world mission. Above all, this gesture must be seen as a demonstration of the fact that the forces which pull the Mennonites together are stronger than the factions which threaten to keep them apart.

Conceptual Mission Language

The Mennonite Brethren have been more successful in creating for themselves a suitable mission milieu in which they can operate with a measure of confidence and ease than they have been in forging a consistent mission language that expresses their unique philosophy with clarity and credibility. In fact, the record provides little evidence that language ever was an issue worthy of consideration. Thus the Brethren have--more by default than by design--slipped into an inconsistent linguistic babel that makes it notoriously difficult to come to a clear understanding of terms and concepts used to describe even their own mission structures, let alone their mission philosophy.

But this has been the nature of mission language throughout the era of Protestant missiology. For example, when Gustav Warneck produced his five-part magnum opus on evangelical theory and practice of mission at the end of the nineteenth century, he devoted six chapters to clarifying mission language. Even a man of his stature was quick to admit that the task was notoriously difficult.[51] A reader

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[50] GCY, 1960, pp. 135-136; cf. pp. 37-38.

[51] Gustav Warneck, Evangelische Missionslehre: Ein missionstheoretischer Versuch, vol. I: Die Begründung der Mission, 2nd ed. (Gotha: Perthes, 1897), pp. 1-59.

of Protestant missiological literature in our time will not only agree with Warneck's admission, but will come to the conclusion that the babel of mission language is no mere confusion of tongues, but a confusion of ideas as well.[52]

Working with Borrowed Tools

Mission thinking in general, and Mennonite Brethren mission thinking in particular, is philosophically rooted in mission language. Mennonite Brethren mission language has been predominantly a borrowed tool used to express what they have thought and done. However legitimate and acceptable such borrowing may be historically and culturally, it is theologically and pragmatically not without hazards. Depending on the source, borrowed language may either enhance or decrease the quality of mission thinking.

Since definition of concepts in mission language has hardly been a conscious concern of the Brethren, they simply have assumed all along that the terms they borrowed and used were expressing what they wanted to say, and that everyone understood what was being said. Neither formal nor functional language inconsistencies ever created serious problems for them.

Yet borrowed language has not left the shape and form of MB mission thinking unaffected; in fact, it has definitely impacted the direction and action of their missionary involvement. American Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism--more than that of Mennonitism--has infused significant theological elements into Mennonite Brethren missiological concepts and content. It is imperative, therefore, to elucidate Mennonite Brethren usage and understanding of

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[52] Here are a few selections dealing with conceptual mission language: Peter Beyerhaus, Shaken Foundations: Theological Foundations for Mission (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), pp. 34-62; Norman A. Horner, ed., Protestant Cross-currents in Mission (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), pp. 19-80, 178-221; Donald McGavran, ed., Eye of the Storm: The Great Debate in Mission (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1972), pp. 41-68, 189-222; R. K. Orchard, Missions in a Time of Testing (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), pp. 21-105.

mission language within the wider Mennonite milieu as well as within the larger nineteenth and twentieth century Protestant context.

Early Germination and Growth

During the pioneer years in America, most Mennonite Brethren were tied to soil and sod by economic toil. Although they were witnessing to the grace of God in their lives, they relied on their leaders for direction and interpretation with regard to the meaning of mission. The records give the impression that the Brethren initially conceptualized mission in wholistic terms as meaning both sentness and witness of all believers in the world.

But very soon ideas began pointing in another direction. The leadership together with the laity "conceived of missions as an immediate and constant effort on the part of capable, called brethren representing the brotherhood to travel about within the constituency and to other available communities to evangelize and expound the Word of God."[53] This definition was entirely in keeping with the decision reached at the first official Convention in 1879.[54] The mandate of the Convention was twofold: (a) engage an evangelist to move from place to place and minister with the Word; and (b) take weekly offerings in the congregations in order to cover the expenses incurred from such a ministry. Two men were appointed by the Conference to manage the funds for this work. Again, there is nothing inherently wrong with either the decision reached or the idea behind it; in fact, both are commendable. Yet they are an indicator of the direction mission thinking was beginning to take.

At the same Convention the novel suggestion was made that the Brethren should not only think of supporting a

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[53] Janzen, "Missionary Dynamic," p. 156.

[54] Representatives from various MB congregations met for a conference in Nebraska in 1878. Since not all churches had sent delegates, the decisions reached there are not officially recognized. See fn. 36, this chapter.

minister of the Word for themselves in America, but also "send a missionary to the heathen who dwell in distant lands."[55] Subsequent discussions revolved around the idea that mission work could not be considered complete unless it simultaneously covered all areas of the world as symbolically expressed in terms "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the remotest parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The record, however, shows no action on the part of the Conference, and the idea seems to have been dropped on the floor.[56]

Nonetheless, the seed-thought planted at the first conference began to germinate. At the Convention held in Hamilton County, Nebraska, in 1881, the Brethren went on record dividing the collection of $52.72 taken at a lovefeast in two equal amounts. They designated $26.36 for Heiden-mission or Gentile mission and allotted the other portion for mission "in the states of Minnesota and South Dakota because of crop failure there."[57]

Up to that point the Mennonite Brethren were only incidentally doing mission work. They merely engaged an evangelist to teach the Word of God in different places within the constituency and collected money for home needs and Heidenmission. Although both are commendable actions on the part of the church, neither gives expression of intentional mission. The one was mere pastoral care, or Seelenpflege, related to building up the body of believers, while the other was at best a kind of "mission by proxy."[58] But that was soon to change. In addition to being a missionary church, the Brethren intentionally decided to enter the arena of a missionizing church. In this process,

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[55] The minutes of the first four Conventions (1879-1882) are recorded in handwritten form and preserved in the archives of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Fresno. Unless otherwise indicated, I am using a typed copy hereafter entered as Minutes, plus the year.

[56] Janzen, "Missionary Dynamic," p. 157; Minutes, 1879, p. 6.

[57] Minutes, 1881, p. 10.

[58] Cf. J. J. Toews, "Mission by Proxy," The Voice 14 (March-April 1965), 3-8.

the forging of a mission language continued to play a significant role. Since the new terms used to describe missionary action became philosophically dominant, they deserve separate treatment. But first a word on mission semantics.

A Semantic Mazeway

The most appropriate designation for the confusing mission language so conspicuous in Mennonite Brethren records is "semantic mazeway." The inconsistencies in spelling alone--to say nothing about meaning--of such common terms as "mission committee" and their German equivalents are simply staggering. In the early Conference reports, written in German, the official name of the agency responsible to carry out the mission of the denomination appears in such orthographic irregularities as "Missions=Comite," "Committee zur Verwaltung der Heidenmissionscasse," "Heidenmissionskomitee," Heidenmissions=Committee," "Komitee für äußere Mission," "Missions Komitee" and "Heiden=Missions=Komitee."[59]

In 1898 the General Conference appointed a Missionsbehörde, a kind of advisory board or counsel, to assist the Committee for Foreign Mission in making major decisions on behalf of the entire brotherhood. The inconsistencies pertaining to this new board were not only orthographic (e.g., "Missions Behörde," "Missions=Behörde," etc.) in nature, but also philosophic, in that the lines of duty between the Committee for Foreign Mission and the mission board were not clearly drawn.[60] The designation of "M.B. Missionsvereinigung" in 1907 did not bring much clarity to the confusion. The inconsistencies were repeated until 1943, when the Conference report was written exclusively in German for the last time. With the 1945 Yearbook the General Conference records began to appear in English, but the semantic mazeway was not eliminated with the change in language. Since the official name of the agency responsible to promote, administer,

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[59] See reports in the following Yearbooks: 1883, p. 7; 1885, p. 12; 1891, p. 24; 1892, p. 23; 1896, p. 18, 1899, p. 17.

[60] Cf. GCY, 1898, pp. 19-20; 1899, p. 17; 1907, p. 32.

and execute the mission of the Conference underwent numerous changes, the exact designation is difficult to ascertain from the records which extend over a period of more than eighty years.

From the founding of the Committee to Administer Mission Funds in 1885 to the merger of the later Board of Missions with the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations in 1966,[61] the name of the mission agency in particular and the mission language in general have remained confusing. Two classical examples suffice to illustrate my point. The one is taken from the highly valuable document consisting of a compilation of "Recommendations and Resolutions of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches."[62] For no apparent reason, the translators and editors of these documents refer to the early MB mission structure either in the plural or the singular as "Missions Committee," "Committee of Missions," "Mission Committee," and "Foreign Missions Committee." In later years such designations as "Board of Missions," "Mission Board," "Missions Board," and "Board of Foreign Missions" occur frequently and interchangeably. Underlying such superficiality in orthography is an obvious lack of conceptual clarity.

Another example can be gleaned from a report given by the Chairman of the Board of Home Missions at the 1981 Pacific District Convention in Reedley. He not only switched constantly from the official name of the "Board of Home Missions" to "Board of Home Mission," but also changed the word order to

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[61] At the Centennial Conference in 1960 the name was officially changed from "The Board of Foreign Missions of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America" to "The Board of Missions of the Mennonite Brethren Church," and in 1966 this Board merged with "The Board of General Welfare and Public Relations" to form "The Board of Missions and Services." Cf. GCY, 1960, p. 154; 1966, pp. 22-23. Chapter 9 below gives more details about structures.

[62] The reference is to the special volume of selected quotations and summary statements of the most important Conference resolutions recorded in the Yearbooks, 1878-1975. A. E. Janzen and Herbert Giesbrecht, comps., We Recommend (Fresno: The Board of Christian Literature of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churhes, 1978), pp. 100-168, 296-310.

"Home Missions Board" or "Home Mission Board." The record also speaks of "Home Missions Churches" and "Home Mission Churches."[63]

Even more puzzling is the language used to differentiate between newly emerging Anglo congregations, which are called "Home Mission churches," and Hispanic congregations, referred to as "indigenous churches." When indigenous churches receive financial subsidy, says the report, "we seek to show them the same kind of care and concern as we do Home Mission churches."[64]

The question to be asked is, what makes a Spanish-speaking congregation of recent Mexican descent supported by the Board of Home Missions within the American society more indigenous than an English-speaking congregation made up of ethnically Caucasian people living in the same social environment and under similar economic circumstances? Does not "indigenous" mean native to the country of habitation or place of dwelling? Does it not mean "not exotic" or "not foreign?" If that is so, then the "home mission churches" would surely be more indigenous than what the report terms "indigenous churches." Surely such terms as "autonomous" or "independent" would have been more appropriate than "indigenous."

There is, of course, nothing morally wrong or unspiritual about either the orthographic inconsistencies or the semantic irregularities, or the use of totally inappropriate concepts. Yet they do portray linguistic insensitivity and a certain conceptual indifference to the believer's highest calling, namely the calling to Christian world mission. If Mennonite Brethren mission leaders do not care about the way they think and speak about the church's primary mandate, it is questionable whether they really can adequately inform and inspire the people at the congregational level. The mission of the church is no haphazard business and deserves the best that

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[63] Personal file. Cf. Pacific District Conference Yearbook 1981, pp. 55-60.

[64] Pacific District Conference Yearbook 1981, p. 57.

men and women have to offer in terms of "a living sacrifice"--including terminology used to conceptualize their mission.

Meaning of Missions and Mission

Like all habits, conceptually linguistic habits are difficult to change. The usage of "missions" in the plural and "mission" in the singular form is a case in point. Whenever the Mennonite Brethren in America made the linguistic transition from German to English,[65] they seem to have adopted the mission vocabulary of the new language. Even though they rarely--if ever--used the plural form Missionen in the German language, they now use the singular and plural forms of "mission" and "missions" indiscriminately in English, paying little attention to either grammatical or conceptual implications. Those who make a distinction between "missions" and "mission" do so on the basis of grammar and philosophy.[66] Few comments are appropriate.

Grammatical Implications

Grammatically speaking, the plural form of the noun "mission" is "missions," just as that of "language" is

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[65] Mennonites who came to the United States and Canada in the 1870s and 1880s continued using German as the church language until World War II. Subsequent migrations to Canada in the 1920s and again in the 1940s and 1950s retarded the transition from German to English considerably. Some Mennonite Brethren congregations in Canada are still bilingual; one or two resist using English altogether, while at the same time losing proficiency in German. The Mennonitische Rundschau, now (1985) in its 108th year of publication, is a classical example of language deterioration. The organ is developing a language all its own, sometimes called "Rundschaudeutsch" by continental Germans. Yet it still serves as an important link for a certain remnant of the Menno tribes scattered throughout the Americas and parts of Europe. For an anthropological perspective of this phenomenon see Jacob A. Loewen, "Role, Self-Image, and Missionary Communication: The Missionary Role," Journal of Church and Society, 3 (Spring 1967), 3-22.

[66] This discussion is based on Chapter 1 of my manuscript, At the Dawn of Millennium Three: Christian Mission in Context (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, forthcoming).

"languages," and that of "confusion" is "confusions." Using the singular verb form for the plural noun form is a violation of the law of grammar. In a simple sentence with the nominative absolute we would consider it unacceptable to say, "The languages is hard"; or, "The present confusions about missions is alarming." However when it comes to the word "missions," linguistic sensitivity has become dulled to the extent that even many mission leaders and missionary statespersons see nothing grammatically incongruent in sentences like, "Missions is the supreme duty of the Church";[67] or "Missions has always been the activity of the Church."[68] Or again, "Mennonite Brethren missions was undergirded by biblical persuasions"; or "Successful missions leads to the creation of a new church," and "Mennonite Brethren missions is entering a new era."[69] A fundamental concept such as Christian mission deserves the exercise of grammatical integrity.

Grammatical inconsistencies are entirely in keeping with Evangelical mission language in Anglophone areas, a fact that seems to have accentuated the problem for the Mennonite Brethren in the transition from German to English. If, for example, the German designation for a mission agency was Missionskomitee (object of genitive requiring "s"-ending), it would only seem natural to those not particularly sensitized to grammatical nuances to say "missions committee" in English. The correct spelling should be "mission's committee," or "missions' committee," to indicate possessive case.

Philosophical Implications

Missiologists have pointed out that the usage of "missions" and "mission" has basic philosophical as well as

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[67] So David Hugh Freeman in his translation of J. H. Bavinck's excellent Inleiding in de Zendigswetenschap into English, An Introduction to the Science of Missions (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1960), p. xv.

[68] Arthur J. Brown, The Foreign Missionary Yesterday and Today (New York: Revell, 1950), pp. 19-20.

[69] Peters, Foundations, pp. 67, 84, 185.

theological implications. Evangelicals have traditionally given preference to the term "missions" over "mission," and have quite consistently viewed "missions" as evangelism or the preaching of the gospel with the definite goal of the conversion of the hearers.[70] In one of the classic mission texts widely used in missionary training institutions, including Mennonite Brethren Bible Institutes and colleges during the 1940s and 1950s, Robert H. Glover defined Christian missions as "the proclamation of the Gospel to the unconverted everywhere according to the command of Christ."[71] This helped to reinforce the common, but narrow, concept of missions as evangelism and was viewed in its vertical dimension as a spiritual enterprise: men and women must hear the gospel, repent of sin, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and experience regeneration and forgiveness in order to be saved.

The term "missions" was also viewed as geographical and cultural expansion. Such words as, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Mt. 28:19, KJV), were interpreted to mean nations other than American and European. Thus throughout the nineteenth century into recent decades of the twentieth, "foreign missions became so central in the outreach of evangelical Christianity that the term 'missions' was generally understood to mean foreign missions."[72] The Mennonite Brethren have fully identified with this concept, although they have included social services as an integral part of "missions."

The term "missions" was--and is--also used as a designation for mission societies and para-church structures organized to carry out the various missionary tasks on behalf

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[70] John R. W. Stott, Christian Mission in the Modern World (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), pp. 15-16. Cf. Ralph D. Winter, "Ghana: Preparation for Marriage," International Review of Mission, special issue, Edinburgh to Melbourne, 1980, pp. 339-342.

[71] Robert H. Glover, The Progress of World-Wide Missions, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 21.

[72] Richard G. Hutcheson, Jr., "Crisis in Overseas Mission: Shall We Leave It to the Independents?" Christian Century, March 18, 1981, p. 291.

of the churches and denominations.[73] In this context the word "missions" is viewed as moving towards the world and preaching to the world rather than being in and for the world.[74] It is interpreted as a ministry to the people, implying condescension, rather than working with the people on a level of equality.

While the Evangelicals or non-Conciliars speak of "missions," the Ecumenicals or Conciliars prefer to speak of "mission." As they changed their language "from missions to mission,"[75] they also changed their philosophy. With the merger of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches in 1961, the Ecumenicals began to view mission in the singular; for them there is only one mission and that is the mission of the worldwide church. This mission is said to be all-inclusive: everything the church does is mission. The ambivalence of this broad definition is obvious, as Stephen Neill has pointed out. "If everything is mission," says Neill, then "nothing is mission. If everything that the Church does is to be classed as 'mission,' we shall have to find another term for the Church's particular responsibility for 'the heathen,' those who have never yet heard the name of Christ."[76] The shift from "missions" to "mission" has also replaced the centrality of the gospel with a focus on social issues. The horizontal rather than the vertical dimension has become primary and thus reduced the

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[73] Cf. C. Peter Wagner, Stop the World I want to Get On (Glendale: Regal Books, 1974), p. 45.

[74] David J. Bosch, "Crosscurrents in Modern Mission," Missionalia, 4 (August 1976), 57.

[75] See book title, From Missions to Mission, by R. Pierce Beaver (New York: Association Press, 1964); cf. David J. Bosch, Witness to the World (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980), particularly chapters 16-21; Richard G. Hutcheson, Jr., Mainline Churches and the Evangelicals (Atlanta: John Knox, (1981); R. K. Orchard, Missions in a Time of Testing (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964).

[76] Stephen Neill, Creative Tension (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1959), p. 81.

missionary message to a "diluted gospel"[77] which stresses mainly the temporal need of mankind, leaving the spiritual untouched.

Needless to say, this shift has released an avalanche of polemics which has consumed much time and energy of both the Evangelicals and the Ecumenicals.[78] Yet at least two positive results have come from this debate. For one thing, the social conscience of the Evangelicals has been raised to a higher level of awareness, as the Lausanne Covenant of 1974 and the 1982 Report of the Consultation on the Relationship Between Evangelism and Social Responsibility spell out.[79] A second result is an increased appreciation for the church, as the 1971 Green Lake Conference of the EFMA and IFMA has shown.[80] Both are convictions the Mennonite Brethren have adhered to all along. For them, mission has always been mission of the church; it is a mission which has always included preaching, teaching, helping, and healing. For some reason, the Mennonite Brethren have never become absorbed in the Evangelical/Ecumenical debate. It seems that they have either been unaware of the conflict, or else simply ignored it, lest they expend time and energy in what might appear

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[77] Bosch, Witness to the World, p. 212; cf. pp. 213-220.

[78] See Donald McGavran, ed., The Eye of the Storm: The Great Debate in Mission (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1972); David J. Bosch, "After Melbourne and Pattaya: A Typology of Two Movements," News Letter, the International Association for Mission Studies, Nos. 16-17, May-October 1980, pp. 21-33; "In Search of Mission: Reflections on 'Melbourne' and 'Pattaya,'" Missionalia, 9 (April 1981), 3-28.

[79] D. J. Douglas, ed., Let the Earth Hear His Voice (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), pp. 3-9; Tom Sine, ed., The Church in Response to Human Need (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1983), pp. 439-487; cf. Chris Sugden and David J. Bosch, "From Partnership to Marriage: Report on CRESR," Missionalia, 10 (August 1982), 75-77.

[80] Virgil Gerber, ed., Missions in Creative Tension (Pasadena: Carey, 1971); cf. C. Peter Wagner, ed., Church/Mission Tensions Today (Chicago: Moody, 1972).

fruitless exercise. But I will say more about that in Chapter 12.

For whatever the reason, current MB literature uses "missions" and "mission" interchangeably and synonymously, regardless of the meaning conveyed to the readers. Even in such recent books as Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions by one of the denomination's leading missiologists, we find the singular and plural forms used without any apparent grammatical consciousness or philosophical distinction between mission and missions. Such phrases as "Mennonite missions agencies" which promote "missions successfully" appear on the same page along with such designations as "Mennonite mission society" which engages "five mission couples."[81] Even more obvious are phrases like "mission festivals" and "missions festivals"; or again, "evangelism and missions" and "evangelism and mission."[82] Judging by the frequency of occurrence, the plural "missions" is the preferred term, usually meaning mission work far away in foreign lands.

Like other evangelical Protestant groups, Mennonite Brethren have interpreted missions to mean everything believers are sent into the world to do by word and deed--namely to preach the gospel, make converts, establish churches, and minister to the needs of humanity. In that sense the use of the plural is legitimate. When the church is seen as structure, it has many functions and tasks which may be viewed as different missions. But this meaning must be explained, and consistent grammatical forms must be used.

The primary mission text has quite consistently been a selected portion from the Great Commission of the longer ending in the Markan pericope which in both the Luther Bible (for those who spoke German) and the King James Version reads

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[81] Peters, Foundations, pp. 20-21.

[82] Peters, Foundations, pp. 17, 18, 29, 30. A cursory checking of pages 15-36 alone reveals thirty such inconsistencies in the usage of "mission" and "missions" without any apparent reason.

like this: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mk. 16:15).[83] In 1954 a portion of the Matthean text was added to official MB documents, emphasizing the need for "teaching all nations, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" (Mat. 28:19).[84] These words of the risen Lord were perceived as fitting the times of colonial expansionism. The church of Jesus Christ in the "Christian" context of the Western World, so it was (rightly) believed, was under marching orders. For all practical purposes this meant that the church must take the gospel to the heathen in other lands around the globe. But there was an inherent misconception which lay in the one-sided emphasis on the church of the Western World, rather than on the church universal. Mission was clearly understood in terms of a one-way street: from "here" to "there." Beginning with the nineteenth century and reaching into recent decades of the twentieth century, the term "foreign missions" was so central in the thinking and action of evangelical churches, including the Mennonite Brethren, that the word "missions" by itself was generally understood to be evangelistic work far away, overseas, in a foreign land.[85] The consequence of such a view of mission is an unbiblical "geography syndrome"; mission must be in distant lands to be authentic.

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[83] Konstitution der Mennoniten Brüder-Gemeinde von Nord-Amerika ([Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House] 1909), p. 7; Constitution of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America ([Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House] 1936), p. 23.

[84] Constitution of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, rev. ed. ([Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House] 1954), p. 38; Constitution of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches ([Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House] 1963), p. 36; "Constitution and Bylaws of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches," 1981, p. 36. (Xeroxed.)

[85] Hutcheson, "Crisis," p. 119.

Denominational Implications

This concept of "foreign missions" has shaped Mennonite Brethren understanding of mission so profoundly, that they as a Conference have resolved to make the Board of Missions and Services an exclusively foreign mission agency. The 1981 edition of the Constitution and Bylaws states that "the Board shall be responsible for the Missions and Services program abroad."[86] Within the boundaries of the Anglo American continent the General Conference since 1957 has delegated all mission responsibilities to the national, district, and provincial conferences in order to be free to give itself to foreign missions.[87]

As I will show in the next chapter, the Mennonite Brethren see a "dual mandate" given by Christ to his church (Acts 1:8)--one for "home missions" and the other for "foreign missions."[88] But such dychotomy raises some critical questions for the missionary enterprise at the end of the twentieth century. How can a mission agency of the older church ever build true partnership with the younger churches? Or how can the concept of "mission on six continents" ever be carried out through the arrangement of foreign missions? Whose foreign missions will it be? Or again, how do the Mennonite Brethren ever hope to resolve the current issue of internationalization? What if their sister conferences in India or Zaire or Brazil also insist that their mission boards will be exclusively foreign mission agencies?

It appears that could face serious conflicts, unless they will radically rethink their mission concept and restructure their mission organization from home missions and foreign missions to the church in world mission. Because

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[86] Constitution and Bylaws of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches, officially adopted at the Convention held August 7-11, 1981, in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, p. 27.

[87] GCY, 1957, pp. 23-24, 40-41, 105.

[88] Janzen, "Mission Dynamic," p. 157.

the Mennonite Brethren rhetorically insist that they uphold a biblical view of the church in mission, their conceptual and linguistic inconsistencies are not adequately recognized and must be challenged. This subject will be addressed more fully in Chapter 13. But first I will turn to mission structures, actions, and resources.

Chapter 9

AN ANATOMY OF MISSION STRUCTURES

Introduction

The General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches has come through times of change and advance in the process of formulating functional mission structures. The phases identified and described in this chapter coincide only loosely with the organizational development of the Conference itself. But those I will analyze in Chapter 11.[1] Here I will attempt to list and interpret the mission structures by themselves from their simple beginning to the present. One annoying problem one has to contend with in such an attempt lies in the linguistic, orthographic, and syntactic inconsistencies of names given to committees, commissions, counsels, and boards designed as vehicles to carry out the total missionary task of the Conference (Table 4). In order to convey as much as possible the original mood and mentality of the Brethren, I have chosen to use the name of the respective organization as it appears in the Constitution or other official records at given periods of history. The current Board of Missions and Services, for example, was created in 1966. Its comprehensive task becomes immediately apparent in the combined designation of "Missions" and "Services." It reflects both an historical event and a missional philosophy. The event was the 1966 merger of two structures, namely the "Board of Missions" and the "Board of General Welfare and Public Relations." I will here use the acronym "BOMAS" or the shortened form "Missions/Services." In some instances, particularly for the earlier period, I will use

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[1] See Table 4 below. G. W. Peters has written an excellent chapter on "Mission Organization' in his recent book, Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions (Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1984), pp. 85-123. I am indebted to Dr. Peters for some of the insights incorporated in this chapter.

Table 4

Mennonite Brethren Mission Structures 1885-1984

Pertinent Observations	Year	Name and Nature of Organization	Membership			Responsibility
			Total	USA	Canada	
1879-1884 Elementary Structures		A committee without a specific name to take care of a Bundeskasse and a Missionskasse	5, 2, and more			Collect money and disperse funds to evangelists at home and in India
First official mission committe	1885	Committee zur Verwaltung der Heiden-missionscasse	8	8		Manage Gentile mission funds
	1889	A mission committee (temporary)	3	3		Search for a field among American Indians
1885-1899 Era of Trial and Orientation	1892	A mission committee (permanent)	9	9		Open work among Indians
	1895	Missionskomitee für Indianermission	4	4		Supervise work among Indians
	1896	Komitee fur äussere Mission = Committee for Foreign Mission 1896-1936	5	5		Recruit missionaries
	1898	Missionsbehörde = Advisory Counsel	1 from each congregation			Advise Committee for Foreign Mission
	1899	Heiden-Missions-Komitee (same as 1896)	3	3		Administer Gentile mission
First Constitution	1900	Mennoniten Brüder Missions-Vereinigung American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union	All MB Congregations			Unify and promote MB Mission work
1900-1908 Era of Incorporation and Stabilization		Verwaltungskomitee = Administrative Committee (Board of Trustees 9; Church Representatives 53)	62	62		Administer the Mission Union
		Ausführungskomitee = Executive Committee	4	4		Work with Verwaltungskomitee
		Komitee sämtlicher Missionare = Missionary Field Committee	All missionaries			Cooperate with other committees to promote the cause of mission
	1902	Vorberatendes Komitee = Advisory Committee	All church leaders			Oversee all mission efforts

Table 4 (continued)

Pertinent Observations	Year	Name and Nature of Organization	Membership			Responsibility
			Total	USA	Canada	
1902 N.N. Hiebert appointed Secretary of the Mission Union (1902-1936)	1904	Verwaltungskomitee (same as 1900)	60	60		Administer all mission work
	1902-07	Komitee für Innere Mission = Committee for Home Mission	6	6		Distribute workload and allot funds to Union evangelists
	1907	Komitee für Stadtmission = Committee for City Mission	3	3		Establish city mission
	1908-09	Das Äussere Missionskomitee = Committee for Foreign Mission (same as 1896)	3	3		Administer foreign mission
		Das Innere Missionskomitee (same as 1907)	3	3		In charge of itinerant evangelism
		Komitee für Stadtmission and Diakonissenarbeit	3	3		Supervise and develop city mission
Second Constitution	1909	The Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America	All MB Congregations			Sponsor all MB mission work
	1912-15	Heidenmissionskomitee = Committee for Gentile Mission	4	4		Manage all Gentile mission
		Stadtmissionskomitee (same as 1908-09	4	4		Mission in Minneapolis
		Verwaltungskomitee (same as 1900)	[60]			Manage mission funds and assist Committee for Gentile mission
1909-1936	1915	Stadtmissionskomitee (same as 1908-09)	3	3		Same as 1912
Committee Authority under Conference Jurisdiction	1919	Missionsdirektorium = Board of Directors	5	5		Meets annually to administer the mission enterprise
A strong triumverate takes charge. In 1919 H.W. Lohrenz was elected Chairman of the Board of Directors with N.N. Hiebert, Secretary, and J.W. Wiens, Treasurer (1919-1936)	1921-24	Missionsdirektorium (same as 1919)	9	7	2	Administer entire Mission enterprise 1924-1936
		Das Äussere Missionskomitee (same as 1896)	4	4		Same as 1912-15
		Stadtmissionskomitee (same as 1908-09)	3	3		
	1921-33	Komitee für Evangelization = Evangelism Committee	4	3	1	Oversee itinerant evangelism and preaching in United States and Canada

Table 4 (continued)

Pertinent Observations	Year	Name and Nature of Organization	Membership			Responsibility
			Total	USA	Canada	
	1924	Hilfskomitee = Relief Committee (new structure)	7	5	2	Cooperate with MCC and assist in relief and settlement
	1924-33	Das Komitee für Stadmission = Stadtmissionskomitee (same as 1902-09)	3	2	1	Supervise city mission in Minneapolis; assist other projects
	1927	Missionsdirektorium (same as 1919)	9	8	1	Same as 1924
		Das Äussere Missionskomitee (same as 1896)	5	4	1	
		Komitee für Hilfeleistung und Ansiedlung = Committee of Relief and Colonization (expansion of 1924)	6	6		
	1930	Komitee für Hilfeleistung und Ansiedlung (same as 1927)	6	4	2	Aid needy in the Soviet Union and immigrants in Canada
	1930-33	Missionsdirektorium (same as 1919)	9	7	2	Same as 1924
		Das Äussere Missionskomitee (same as 1896)	6	4	2	
	1933	Komitee für Hilfeleistung und Ansiedlung (same as 1927)	5	4	1	Same as 1927-30
Third Constitution	1936	The Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America	All MB Congregations			Sponsor all MB mission work
		Komitee für Äussere Mission = Board of Foreign Missions (new structure 1936-60)	5	4	1	Administer and execute crosscultural mission together with the Missionary Field Committee
		Das Äussere Missionskomitee (same as preceding structure)				
Conference creates a new administrative position for the new Board of Foreign Missions and appoints H.W. Lohrenz as its first Secretary Treasurer (1936-1945		Missionary Field Committee	All missionaries on the fields			
	1936-39	Komitee für Innere Mission	5	4	1	Keep statistics and represent District Conferences

Table 4 (continued)

Pertinent Observations	Year	Name and Nature of Organization	Membership			Responsibility
			Total	USA	Canada	
		Komitee für Stadtmission	3	3		
	1936-43	Committee of General Welfare and Public Relations	7	5	2	Promote peace and nonresistance aid oppressed and suffering in the world
1936 Hilfskomitee (General Conference) and Komitee für Wehrfrage und Dienst am Evangelium (Canada) mere to form Board of General Welfare and Public Relations (1936-1966)	1939	Komitee für Äussere Mission (same as 1936)	5	3	2	Same as 1936
	1943	Committee on Foreign Missions (same as the 1936 structure)	5	4	1	
		Home Missions Committe	5	3	2	
1945 The Northern District Conference incorporates and changes to "Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America."	1943-45	City Missions Committee	3	3		Same as 1936-39
	1945	Welfare and Public Relations Committee (same as 1936-48)	5	3	2	Assist MB refugees and the MB Churches in Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay
		Board of Foreign Missions (same as 1936)	6	4	2	Same as 1936
	1945-48	Home Missions Committee	6	4	2	
A.E. Janzen is appointed General Secretary-Treasurer of the Board of Foreign Missions (1945)	1948	Board of Foreign Missions	5	3	2	Same as 1936
		General Welfare and Public Relations Committee (same as 1936-43)	5	2	3	Same as 1945
1948-63 Conference operates under a Provisional Constitution	1948-51	City Missions Committee	3	2	1	
	1951	Board of Foreign Missions	9	6	3	Same as 1936
		General Welfare and Public Relations	9	4	5	Same as 1945-48
		Home Missions Committee	5	4	1	
The Golden Age of MB Mission 1945-1963)	1954	Board of Foreign Missions	9	5	4	
		City Mission Board	3	3		

Table 4 (continued)

Pertinent Observations	Year	Name and Nature of Organization	Membership			Responsibility
			Total	USA	Canada	
	1954-57	Board of General Welfare and Public Relations	9	5	4	Assist MB churches in South America with evangelism, education, and church leadership
	1957	Board of Foreign Missions	9	4	5	
1959 District Conferences in the US organize area conference called "The United States Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church" as counterpart to the Canadian Conference. District Conferences continue as before.	1954-60	Committee of Home Missions	10	4	6	
	1960	Board of Missions (new structure 1960-66)	11	6	5	
		Board of General Welfare and Public Relations	11	6	5	Same as 1954-57
Fourth Constitution	1963	The Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches				Designations for Structures
1963-1969						1. Komitee zur Verwaltung der Heidenmissionskasse 1885 (Committee for Managing the Mission Treasury)
Era of Concerns and Crises						
1963 Constitution makes provision for MB Churches in every country to become Area Conferences patterned after US and Canadian models		Board of Missions (same as 1960)	12	5	7	2. Komitee für äussere Mission 1896-1936 (Committee for Foreign Mission)
		Board of General Welfare and Public Relations	3	2	1	3. Missionsdirectorium 1919-1936 (Board of Directors; Mission Directorate)
	1966	Board of Missions and Services (new structures)	15	8	7	
1968-1984						4. Komitee für äussere Mission = Board of Foreign Missions 1936-1960
Era of Realignment and Reorganzation	1969	Board of Missions and Services	13	7	6	
1966 Board of Missions and Board of General Welfare and Public Relations merge to form The Board of Missions and Services	1972	Board of Missions and Services	14	8	6	5. Committee (Board) of General Welfare and Public Relations 1936-1966
	1975	Board of Missions and Services	15	7	8	6. Board of Missions 1960-1966
	1978	Board of Missions and Services	11	5	6	7. Board of Missions and Services 1966 - Present
	1981-84	Board of Missions and Services	11	6	5	

the German designations as they appear in the sources and add English equivalents.

As I state and analyze the eras which reflect Mennonite Brethren Mission thinking in terms of organizational principles and structural formations, I will seek to capture the essential highlights by focusing on (a) elementary structures prior to 1885; (b) foundation and framework 1885-1899; (c) registration and reconstruction 1900-1909; (d) authority and centrality 1909-1936; (e) trends and transitions 1936-1963; (f) concerns and crises 1966-1969; (g) realignment and reorganization 1969-1982; and (h) the present model 1984. A detailed table with all the names, dates, and other pertinent information as well as several figures will help to illustrate the structures designed for dynamic action.

Elementary Structures Prior to 1885

At the first corporate meeting of the Brethren in Hamilton County, Nebraska, in 1878, where the foundation of the Mennonite Brethren Conference was laid, Jakob Ehrlich and Eduard Löppke (the latter had been itinerant evangelist in Russia) preached on the "precious subject of mission."[2] But beyond that there was no specific discussion about mission. The following year, however, when the Brethren met for their first official Convention in York County, Nebraska, the minutes again report that three men spoke on the "precious subject of mission."[3] At this Convention there was the first indication of a mission structure, namely the appointment of a five-member committee to manage mission funds. The collection of $50.67 was designated for mission, but the nature of mission was not defined.[4]

At the 1880 Convention in York County, the committee gave a report on mission activities and noted that there were

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[2] Minutes, 1878, p. 4. For full data of this source see Chapter 8, note #55. The Brethren also took an offering of $18.61 at this meeting, but it is not clear whether it was designated for mission.

[3] Minutes, 1879, p. 24.

[4] Minutes, 1879, pp. 29-30.

insufficient funds in the Bundeskasse to cover all expenditures of the Missionskasse. While the nature of mission was clearly described as itinerant evangelism and preaching, it is not so clear whether the Bundeskasse or conference treasury and the Missionskasse or mission treasury were one and the same or two different treasuries. Since the report mentions only one committee, which in 1880 was reduced to two members, it is possible that the Brethren used Bundeskasse and Missionskasse interchangeably; it is even more likely that the one committee was in charge of two treasuries.[5]

The term Heidenmission or Gentile mission occurred for the first time in the 1881 Convention records. No structural changes were recorded, except that the funds of the Gentile mission treasury were handed over to the deacons of York County. It is also interesting to note that mission concerns of the Brethren had by now expanded beyond Seelenpflege to include Heidenmission as well as missionary activities of women. The nature of women's work is not described, no structure mentioned and its implementation made contingent on availability of finances. While the report shows that the Brethren had $499.60 in the Bundeskasse, it says nothing more about women's work. An important decision was made about the love offering of $52.72 taken at the Liebesmahl. The Brethren designated half of it for Heidenmission and gave it to Karl Gloekler, a representative of the German Baptist mission; the other half was handed over to Heinrich Adrian and designated for use by the churches in South Dakota and Minnesota, which had experienced crop failure because of drought.[6]

Similar action was taken in 1882, except that there one third of the love offering was designated for äußere Mission in India and two thirds for innere Mission in America. The committee managing the Conference treasury was now enlarged to include one member from each local congregation, with Bernard Pauls of Kansas serving as chairman. It was his duty

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[5] Minutes, 1880, pp. 37-42.

[6] Minutes, 1881, p. 49.

to disburse funds as designated and to pay the itinerant preachers according to Conference decision.[7] The same committee was asked at the Convention of 1883 to continue its service under the name "Missions-Comite" (sic). The collections for this and the following year were divided the same way as the previous year.[8] At the 1884 Convention the Brethren decided to support a national worker in India with $100 annually.[9]

These early beginnings of basic structures from 1879-1884 merit additional comments. For one thing, the importance given to mission by the Brethren is impressive. At every convention from 1879 onward they devoted the first session--after preliminaries were taken care of--to the cause of mission. Furthermore, mission began to take shape both philosophically and structurally as "home mission" and "foreign mission." The one was defined in terms of itinerant evangelism and preaching, while the other referred to mission among Gentile peoples in other lands. Then, too, in 1882 the treasury was divided into two categories: the Bundeskasse for home mission and the Missionskasse--later called Heidenmissionskasse--for foreign mission. Finally, it became clear to the Brethren that no permanent mission work could be established on such elementary experimental structures as they had formed up to this point, and that a sound organization was needed to expand their vision. That led to a more solid organization.

Trial and Orientation 1885-1899

While the early Brethren were sure of the need to enlarge their missional vision, they were less sure of the steps

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[7] Minutes, 1882, pp. 66-70.

[8] GCY, 1883, pp. 7-8; 1884, pp. 9-10. For the meaning of GCY see Chapter 8, note #22.

[9] GCY, 1884, p. 13. Seven delegates voted against the decision because they wanted the Conference to support two rather than one evangelist in India. Therefore, some of them sent private donations to the Baptists for support of a second worker. Cf. GCY, 1885, pp. 11-12.

demanded to realize that vision. How should they create effective mission structures that would endure the test of time? Having no experience on the missionary road, how were they to determine whether the emerging structures would be able to carry their vision? It took repeated acts of faith to lay the proper foundations and to build an appropriate framework. It happened by trial and error, to be sure, but persistent trial often corrects existing error. The Brethren dared to make errors and succeeded in overcoming some of them.

The First Structures for Gentile Mission

The 1884 decision to give financial support through the Baptists to one evangelist in India, while a second one was supported privately, called for the formation of a special foreign mission treasury. Thus at the Convention of 1885 the Brethren elected an eight-member "Committee zur Verwaltung der Heidenmissionscasse," chaired by Cornelius Wedel.[10] Each member of this new committee, known as Komitee für Heidenmission or "Committee for Gentile Mission,"[11] was charged with receiving funds from the congregations within his area and with forwarding these funds to the chairman, who had the responsibility of sending the moneys to people as designated by the Conference. This Komitee was specifically created for the benefit of foreign mission involvement, even though the Conference did not yet have either a field to occupy or missionaries to send out.[12] Incidentally, 1885 was also the year when Abraham Friesen in Russia volunteered to be the first MB missionary to India.

In 1889 the Conference appointed a temporary search committee which was to locate a mission field among native Americans, a venture which in 1892 was taken over by a

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[10] GCY, 1885, p. 12.

[11] In the record of 1892, the long name of the Committee is given as "Heidenmissions=Committee" (sic), still chaired by Wedel (GCY, 1892, p. 23).

[12] Janzen, "Missionary Dynamic," p. 159.

standing committee of nine members under the chairmanship of Abraham Schellenberg. Although no official name was immediately given to this committee, its assignment was clear: open a mission field among American Indians as soon as possible.[13] According to the 1895 record, the committee was reduced to four members and officially called "Missionskomitee für die Indianermission."[14] Thus there were now two official mission committees.

Reflecting on these structural beginnings, the newly appointed General Secretary for Missions and Services made a pertinent historical observation at the Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1969, saying:

> No program, however, new or unique, can develop without the foundation of the past. Ninety years ago at the first General Conference of Mennonite Brethren churches in Henderson, Nebraska, the Conference elected a central missions treasurer. The central missions treasurer reported the missions receipts on the floor and the administration of missions was done on the conference floor under the chairmanship of the conference moderator. Ten years later a foreign missions committee with a definite mandate was formed. The mandate was to find a mission field for the Mennonite Brethren Conference. This was the beginning of the Mennonite Brethren Board of Foreign Missions.
>
> Through these ninety years the churches, the board, its officers, and the workers in the field have achieved a formidable record of thoroughness and stability. It is this good base which should give us cause to believe that we can improve in the future. In this ninety-first year we encourage one another to rededicate and redouble our efforts to confront the world with Christ.[15]

The First Structures for Foreign Mission

The 1896 Convention at Ebenfeld, Kansas, was a turning-point in MB mission structure in this foundational period. Because of aggressive missionary recruitment by the Baptists among the Mennonite Brethren, two couples were secured and

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[13] GCY, 1892, p. 22.

[14] GCY, 1895, p. 10.

[15] GCY, 1969, pp. 48-49.

commissioned by the German Baptist Mission Society of Berlin to serve in Cameroon, Africa. This action on the part of the Baptists created serious tensions between them and the Mennonite Brethren. But it also gave the Brethren an occasion to examine their own mission structures and to discover that their whole organizational framework was, indeed, too tentative, inefficient, and inadequate to deal with such critical mission issues as recruitment, financial support, and field administration.

The Brethren were far behind the Baptists, and both knew it. Therefore, the Conference appointed a five-member Komitee für äußere Mission or Committee for Foreign Mission. With some modifications, this Committee remained in force for forty years. Elder Abraham Schellenberg served as its first chairman and J. F. Harms as treasurer. The Committee was elected for three years and instructed to observe a specific three-step strategy for recruitment: (a) every potential missionary candidate must discover his/her call to mission in consultation with the respective elder of the church; (b) the elder must facilitate contact between the potential candidate and the Committee for Foreign Mission; and (c) the Committee must then gather information about the person in question and take appropriate steps for eventual appointment.[16]

In 1898 the Conference convened for the first time in Canada, in the town of Winkler, Manitoba. At this Convention three significant actions were taken--signs of tightening the structure and expanding the vision. First, the Conference created a Missionsbehörde or Mission Board to serve as an advisory counsel to the Committee for Foreign Mission. This Mission Board consisted of an unknown number of church leaders representing the various congregations.[17] Second, the Conference passed a twofold resolution of policy: (a) neither

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[16] GCY, 1896, p. 18.

[17] GCY, 1898, p. 19. G. W. Peters is not always clear when he talks about the "Board" as to whether he means the Committee for Foreign Mission or the Missionsbehörde. Cf. Foundations, pp. 86-87.

the MB mission nor its missionaries should be subject to or controlled by other mission agencies; and (b) other societies who accepted MB young people for missionary service should be held financially responsible for them.[18] Third, the Conference accepted the N. N. Hieberts as its first missionaries to India.[19]

It was indeed a bold venture of faith for a small denomination to assume responsibility for a field of work that consisted of some 2,000 villages with more than a million inhabitants.[20]

The Ebenfeld Consultation of 1899

On April 11, 1899, the Missionsbehörde called a special consultation in Ebenfeld, Kansas, where the groundwork was laid for a complete restructuring of MB mission. Although the meeting was convened by the Mission Board, Abraham Schellenberg and J. F. Harms of the Committee for Foreign Mission presided as chairman and recording secretary respectively. Some sixty preachers and lay leaders who made up the Mission Board represented the various congregations of the Conference. The decisions made at this consultation had far-reaching consequences for the future of MB mission structures, strategy, and action.

First, it was decided to open a Mennonite Brethren mission field in India, independent of the Baptist work. Mennonite Brethren missionary Abraham Friesen from Russia, working in India under the German Baptist Missionary Union of Boston, was present at this meeting. He suggested that such an independent

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[18] GCY, 1898, pp. 19-20; cf. Janzen, "Missionary Dynamic," p. 158.

[19] GCY, 1898, pp. 18-19. For more details of this event see below, Chapter 13, p.

[20] Janzen, "Missionary Dynamics," p. 161. One source indicates that the American German Baptists were prepared to give to the American Mennonite Brethren an area of 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants in the Nalgonda district. See "Bericht über die Verhandlungen der Missionsbehörde am 11. April, 1899 in Ebenfeld, Kans[as]," Zionsbote, April 12, 1899, p. 4.

mission field could be most appropriately established in proximity to the Baptist work in Nalgonda, where he and other MB missionaries from Russia were serving. Nine preachers and about fifty lay representatives voted to approve this direction.

Second, it was decided that the MB church should commission its own missionaries. The Brethren unanimously agreed that the N. N. Hieberts should be ordained at their home church in Minnesota and sent to India as soon as possible.

Third, several single female missionaries were approved for MB mission work. Katharina Schellenberg and Elisabeth Neufeld were accepted as candidates to accompany the Hieberts if at all possible.

Fourth, the Committee for Foreign Mission was charged to draft a constitution for legal incorporation as well as guidelines for mission operation. The acceptance of missionaries as employees by the Conference made this step mandatory. This also meant that both the Conference and its mission organization would have to be restructured and officially registered in order to function as a corporation.[21] The assembled Missionsbehörde charged the Committee for Foreign Mission to prepare such a document and present it at the next Convention for Conference ratification and approval.

Fifth, the question of an educational institution was raised and discussed at this mission consultation. This was a noteworthy step in view of the long-term future of mission. The specific issue had to do with an offer from the administration of McPherson College of McPherson, Kansas, to assume responsibility for the entire German Department of a new MB institution, which was to be operated on Christian principles. Although no final decision could be reached without endorsement by the Conference, the issue was taken to the local congregations, duly processed and approved.[22] The Brethren

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[21] "Bericht," in Zionsbote, April 12, 1899, p. 4; cf. Statuten der Mennoniten Brüder Missions Vereinigung (Lehigh, KS: S. S. Bote, 1901), p. 1.

[22] "Bericht," in Zionsbote, Papril 12, 1899, p. 4.

saw in all of this the leading of the Lord for opening a school in which they would be able to train their own youths in MB distinctives and prepare them for witness and mission throughout the world. The proposal was unanimously accepted at the Convention in Nebraska that same year.[23]

Since the three-year term of the Committee for Foreign Mission elected in 1896 had expired, the delegates at the 1899 Convention appointed a new committee, called Heiden-Missions-Komitee. This new organization had three members whose terms of service were staggered as follows: Abraham Schellenberg, Chairman, one year; Franz Ediger, Treasurer, two years; and Johann (J. F.) Harms, Secretary, three years. This move gave evidence that the Brethren had begun building a structural framework of continuity and stability onto their missional foundation.[24] By this time Schellenberg and Harms were no longer novices in mission administration; they had been the movers of the movement since its inception.

Incorporation and Stabilization 1900-1909

This period can most appropriately be described by the term "stabilization," as G. W. Peters has put it.[25] Yet there were also other characteristics that surfaced quite prominently, beginning with registration and ending with reconstruction.

Registration

The conference held in Buhler, Kansas on October 22-25, 1900, was an historic occasion for laying a stable organizational foundation for Mennonite Brethren mission in years to come. The theological, structural, and legal terms were clearly spelled out in the first American Mennonite Brethren Constitution and Charter of Bylaws. The document was

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[23] GCY, 1899, pp. 17-18; cf. J. F. Dürksen, "Eine freundliche Einladung," Zionsbote, September 4, 1901, p. 2.

[24] GCY, 1899, p. 17.

[25] Peters, Foundations, pp. 86-89. Peters applies the term "stabilization" for the period 1896-1909.

carefully studied, altered as needed, and then adopted for incorporation purposes. On November 20, 1900 the Mennonite Brethren were officially registered with the State Charter Board of Topeka, Kansas under the name, "American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union," which in their records appears as Mennoniten Brüder Missions-Vereinigung.[26] Even if the Constitution proved inadequate in the long run and had to be revised and amended within a decade, it still provided the Conference with missiological direction and structural stability. Its statement of purpose and philosophy is significant:

> Although the Mennonite Brethren Mission Union has the responsibility to preach the Gospel of Christ to all people, it is the explicit purpose of this corporation [a] to bring the good news to those heathen who know nothing of a living God and have no knowledge of the redemption through Christ; [b] to help them out of their spiritual misery; and [c], relieve them, as much as possible, from physical need.[27]

This wholistic approach was and has remained the theological core of Mennonite Brethren mission philosophy and practice.

Organization

Even more important for our purpose here is the threefold organization of the Mission Union. The first component was the Union as a whole, a new phenomenon in MB organization. This component consisted of three clearly defined aspects: (a) all Mennonite Brethren Church members who supported its work with prayers and gifts were members; (b) all those who were God's children and gave active support to the Union were legitimate honorary members, even if they did not belong to the Mennonite Brethren Church; and (c) all members and honorary members should consider it their responsibility to support this work with faithful prayers and freewill gifts.

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[26] GCY, 1900, pp. 33-35; see also original German edition of the Constitution published in the Zionsbote, December 11, 1901, p. 3; December 18, 1901, p. 4; January 1, 1902, p. 6; January 8, 1902, p. 2.

[27] Statuten, 1901, pp. 5-6; cf. the translation in Peters, Foundations, Appendix B.3, p. 212.

The second component was the Verwaltungskomitee or Administrative Committee. This consisted of sixty members from the constituency, including the nine-member Board of Trustees of the corporation, and was in some respects similar to the former Missionsbehörde. Three of the trustees were to be elected at each annual conference for a three-year period, thus staggering their term of service. It is important to note that not more than half of the Administrative Committee could be preachers. Thereby the Brethren designated considerable administrative responsibility to the laity, who managed the mission endeavor more from the Convention floor than in separate committee meetings.

The third structural component was the Ausführungskomitee or Executive Committee, consisting of chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and treasurer. This committee was organized much like the Heidenmissionskomitee of 1899 in that one member was newly elected by the Conference each year for a three-year term. These last two committees worked in consultation with each other and together carried the major responsibility for the work of the entire Union.

It should also be noted that there was a "Missionary Field Committee," composed of all missionaries on a given field. But the responsibility of decision making in every phase of the Union's work lay clearly with the Administrative Committee and the Executive Committee. These, together with the Missionary Field Committee, made up the Board of Directors or Missionsvorstand, a body vested with enormous power with regard to missionary personnel, selection of mission stations, and designation of mission funds.[28]

Nature of the Union

The document reflects several unique characteristics about the Mission Union.

1. It was distinctive in name. Therein lay a sense of identity. For one thing, it was an American organization,

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[28] Statuten, 1901, pp. 6-8; Konstitution, 1909, p. 8.

not Russian, even though all of the signatorees had come from Russia. Although the descriptive adjective "American" appeared neither in the title of the Constitution nor in most subsequent documents, the original Charter clearly stated that the founders were citizens of the United States and Canada (one was Canadian), and that the official name of the corporation was "Die Amerikanische Mennoniten Brüder Missions Vereinigung."[29] Furthermore, it was clear that the Union was Mennonite Brethren and not Baptist in ecclesiology and theological confession. Of course, the name was too similar to that of the German Baptist Missionary Union of Boston not to suggest Baptist influence, yet it was precise enough that the Baptists--particularly the Berlin Baptist Mission Society--could no longer take the Mennonite Brethren for granted as a mere pool of financial and human resources.[30]

2. It was all-embracing in structure. There was a built-in desire for unity both in action and in spirit. G. W. Peters points out that "the Union was but an enlargement of the small 'mission unions' which existed in local congregations to stimulate mission interest." This larger Mission Union, says Peters, was expected to unify and energize the smaller unions, "and thus make for a concentrated, united effort."[31] But there was another, much deeper concern behind the formation of the Union, namely that of uniting the many small Mennonite Brethren congregations scattered over hundreds of miles across the open prairie states and provinces of the vast continent. Elder Schellenberg, chairman of the Committee for Foreign Mission since its inception in 1896, had been in the vanguard of mission leadership from the time of his arrival in America in 1879. His overriding vision and all-consuming

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[29] Statuten, 1901, p. 2.

[30] Cf. the agonizing discussion which the Brethren had at the 1896 Convention. They were greatly disturbed that the Berlin Baptists had recruited the Wedels and Ennses in whom the Brethren had invested money, prayer, and hope to become their first foreign missionaries (GCY, 1896, pp. 13-18).

[31] Peters, Foundations, p. 88.

passion until his death in 1920 was "a unity for the scattered churches."[32] As the major architect of the Constitution and MB mission structure, Schellenberg firmly believed that the one single rallying point for Mennonite Brethren in America was the worldwide mission of the church. Therefore the name "Mission Union" was an appropriate choice.

3. It was worldwide in scope. The first article of the bylaws which expressed the purpose of the Mission Union stated that it was "to bring and preach through missionaries the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all peoples who do not have that Gospel either in home or foreign lands."[33] Although the comprehensive purpose statement narrows the scope somewhat by saying that the Gospel shall be preached "to all people, particularly the heathen," the context still retains its universal intent.[34] It is also noteworthy that this is the only edition of the Constitution that does not dichotomize between home and foreign mission. All subsequent editions make theological and philosophical assumptions which have created a mentality that perceives world mission exclusively as "foreign missions."[35]

4. It was ecumenical in spirit. This may sound like a paradox because of its explicit reference to "Mennonite Brethren" in the title. But that was principally an expression of denominational identity and distinctiveness, not of sectarian exclusiveness. Therefore, the Union could provide room for honorary membership to "all of God's children"

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[32] N. N. Hiebert, "The Contributions of Reverend Abraham Schellenberg to the Foreign Missions of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America," Tabor College Herald, New Series I, 4 (January 1931), 21.

[33] Statuten, 1901, p. 3.

[34] Statuten, 1901, pp. 5-6.

[35] Konstitution der Mennoniten Brüder-Gemeinde von Nord-Amerika [Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House], 1909, pp. 7-12; Constitution of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America [Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House], 1936, pp. 23-31; Constitution of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches [Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House], 1963, p. 34.

outside the Mennonite Brethren Church who supported this work. Because no identification is made as to who these other children of God might be, one can only speculate. In more likelihood, however, the Brethren had other Mennonite groups in mind, particularly the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren. There is an interesting report about two meetings held in 1895 between several Mennonite denominations--including the Krimmer--under the motto: "Einigkeit mach stark" or "Unity Fortifies."[36] The issues revolved around ways and means of uniting mission efforts for work among orphaned children. The chairman of the second meeting suggested that such joint venture could operate under the appealing name, Vereinigte Missions-Gemeinde or "United Mission Church."[37]

This intriguing idea may have inspired the founding fathers of the Mennonite Brethren Mission Union to demonstrate by their charter that they were still entertaining the possibility of working together in mission with other Mennonite groups. It is also possible that the Brethren were making special overtures to the Krimmer Brethren, who in 1898 had elected a mission committee and decided to commission their first missionary couple to India as soon as it would be found expedient to do so. Did the Mennonite Brethren wish and hope that the Krimmer would join them in a Mission Union as early as 1900? Whatever the factors might have been that led to the choice of the name, it was, as someone has put it, "a diplomatic choice indeed."[38]

Restructuring

As positive and unifying as the first Constitution may have been, its shortcoming soon became evident and called for revision and reconstruction. The process was set in motion

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[36] [Harms, J. F.], Bericht über zwei Beratungen, die am 21. Okt. und 11. November 1895 stattfanden (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Publishing Co., n.d.), front cover.

[37] Bericht, p. 9.

[38] Peters, Foundations, p. 88.

in 1903 and lasted until 1908 when the Constitution was officially adopted. A year later it was filed with the State Charter Board.[39]

Executive Authority Under Conference Jurisdiction 1909-1936

The revised Constitution of 1909 impacted mission philosophy, structure, and operation in numerous ways.

First, it dissolved the Mission Union and replaced it with the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, which was henceforth responsible for the entire missionary enterprise. The objective was to bring mission under Conference jurisdication.[40] Yet the outcome was quite different from the intent, as I will show shortly.

Second, it sought to resolve an implicit issue of authority within the Union's leadership. The actions of the Mission Union, particularly those of the Chairman, appear to have been too independent in nature. This was never expressly stated, but was strongly implied, and, as one reads the records, one senses the tension between the Chairman and other leaders, making the validity of the implications all the more probable. In his passionate concern for unifying the scattered congregations around the issue of world mission, Elder Schellenberg as Chairman of the Union and Chairman of the Committee for Gentile Mission, may have become overly anxious to achieve his goal and exercised more authority than the brotherhood was able to tolerate.[41] Therefore, the

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[39] The revision of this Constitution was finalized during the 1907-1908 Conference interim and adopted to go into effect at the 1908 Convention in Süd Hoffnungsfeld near Isabella, Oklahoma. It was, however, first filed with the State Charter Board of Topeka, Kansas, on February 18, 1909 and subsequently published. Therefore, it is correctly referred to as the "Constitution of 1909," Cf. GCY, 1908, pp. 40-41; Constitution, 1909, p. 16; GCY, 1909, pp. 52-53.

[40] Konstitution, 1909, pp. 1-4; Peters, Foundations, pp. 85, 89-90.

[41] The Conference records do not explicitly state, but give implicit witness to Elder Schellenberg's authoritarian influence in crucial decisions. Cf. the discussion on

revised Constitution made two clear provisions: (a) the actions of the Chairman were henceforth to be approved by the Directorate, which in turn would be appointed by the Conference and not by the Mission Union or any other executive board; and (b) the Chairman would not have any voting rights either in the Directorate or in the Executive Committee.

Third, it placed foreign mission administration into the hands of a nine-member Direktorium, also known as Directorate or Board of Trustees, of which the Executive Committee was an integral part.[42] While the purpose of this shift was to lessen the legislative power of the erstwhile Administrative Committee, the architects of the move evidently overlooked the debilitating effect the new design would have on Conference jurisdiction with regard to mission. Authority merely shifted from the Administrative Committee to the Executive Committee.[43] A case in point was the fateful conference resolution of 1924 which stated that the Missionsdirektorium was to be given full administrative and executive jurisdiction in sending out all missionaries.[44] While the task of the Administrative Committee was thereby reduced to collecting funds in the churches and submitting them to the mission treasurer,[45] that of the Executive Committee was enlarged to the point of giving it control of the mission.

Fourth, the Missionary Field Committee received increased responsibility by placing it alongside the Executive Committee, to serve the latter with "counsel and support."[46] Its role

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Conference expansion, GCY, 1907, pp. 6-10, especially p. 10, and the debate about D. F. Bergthold's suitability as missionary to India, GCY, 1904, pp. 19-21, 3; 1901, pp. 3-4; 1903, p. 3; Konstitution, 1909, p. 4.

[42] Konstitution, 1909, pp. 8-9.

[43] Cf. Konstitution, 1909, p. 8 and Konstitution, 1900, p. 7. See also G. W. Peters' interpretation of the structure which differs from mine (Foundations, p. 90).

[44] GCY, 1924, p. 32.

[45] Konstitution, 1909, p. 8.

[46] Konstitution, 1909, p. 8.

was advisory rather than administrative or executive.[47]

Fifth, the revised Constitution neatly compartmentalized the infrastructure of the Conference mission into Heidenmission, Innere Mission, and Stadtmission und Diakonissenarbeit.[48] This was not only a structural readjustment for pragmatic reasons, but a philosophical shift as well. The last two categories or compartments were eventually placed under the responsibility of district conferences and local congregations, making Gentile mission work an exclusive concern of the General Conference.[49]

With such changes either carried out or set in motion, another constitutional revision became inevitable.

Trends and Transitions 1936-1963

"Internal and external growth of the Conference," says the introduction to the German edition of the 1936 Constitution, "brought about a sense of felt needs to study the Bylaws with the intent of subjecting them to revision for the purpose of unifying the various branches of the work."[50] Thus the process of revision was set in motion at the 1930 Convention in Hepburn, Saskatchewan. The Conference appointed a committee to take on the task.[51]

Descriptive Characterization

The inherent potential in the new Constitution for growth and expansion of Mennonite Brethren mission had no bounds, and its implementers observed few limits. In addition, there was the long tenure of mission administrators. Men like N. N. Hiebert (1901-1936), H. W. Lohrenz (1919-1945), A. E. Janzen (1945-1963), and J. B. Toews (1953-1963) gave a combined total of ninety years of key leadership to mission. These men had

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[47] GCY, 1912, p. 12.

[48] Konstitution, 1909, pp. 7, 11, 13.

[49] Konstitution, 1909, pp. 4, 8; cf. GCY, 1903, pp. 14-16; Constitution, 1936, pp. 23-30.

[50] Konstitution, 1936, p. 4.

[51] GCY, 1930, p. 48.

the charisma of leadership, missionary vision, the ability to give direction, and credibility with the brotherhood. Perhaps it was divine providence that these men were placed into crucial leadership roles at such critical times as World War I, the Great Depression of the 1930s, and World War II, followed by internationally unprecedented trends, changes, and upheavals in the world of mission.

The three different Conference mission endeavors, identified as city mission, home mission, and foreign mission, constituted only one of those "various branches of the work" which were to be revised and reorganized within the Conference structures as outlined by the constitutional revisionists.

There emerged, as it were, a centripetal force of gravity which pulled every aspect of mission work to a locus of power where policies were forged on the anvil of authority, and momentous decisions were made by those in control. Earlier periods had not been entirely free from such trends, as the Missionsdirektorium demonstrated from 1924 to 1936. Yet the trend had remained somewhat subdued. But with the dawn of the 1930s, limitations began to fade. What once had been a strongly congregational Conference bound by a brotherhood covenant in which decisions were reached by consensus on the Convention floor rapidly began to develop into a denomination with authority lodged in committees and boards. This was particularly the case with the foreign mission enterprise governed by the new "Board of Foreign Missions."[52]

The development of this trend has elicited characterization of the mission era from 1936-1963 as "a period of Centralization."[53] While centralization was first of all a distinctly internal phenomenon of leadership, the more obvious manifestations were tensions and transitions forced upon the

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[52] See the "Vorlage zu einer Revision der Konferenz der Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde von Nord-Amerika," 1933 (n.p, n.p., 1933), p. 16; cf. pp. 16-24; Constitution of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America (n.p., n.p., 1936), pp. 23-32; cf. GCY, 1933, pp. 6, 88; GCY, 1936, p. 6.

[53] Peters, Foundations, p. 91.

mission administration by both internal conditions and external historical circumstances.

New Philosophy of Structure

Fundamental structural changes occurred simultaneously with and subsequent to the adoption of the constitutional revisions of 1936. Yet the years prior to this time were historically of fundamental importance for the new philosophy of structure.

First, just as the Constitution of 1909 had dissolved the Mission Union and placed function and direction into the hands of the Direktorium, so the revised Constitution of 1936 eliminated the Directorate and put the newly-formed five-member Board of Foreign Missions in control of all crosscultural mission work.[54]

Second, the Conference created a new position with a double responsibility, namely that of Sekretär-Schatzmeister or Secretary-Treasurer. The most crucial organizational decision ever made by the Convention delegates was the appointment of H. W. Lohrenz, Chairman of the former Direktorium, to this prestigious new office.[55] This new structure meant, for all practical purposes, that the administrative and legislative responsibilities were now vested in one board--if not in one person. The appointment of a Secretary-Treasurer for mission leadership formed the immediate basis of and paved the long-term way for an entirely new philosophy of Mennonite Brethren mission management and operation. Upon the death of Lohrenz on March 16, 1945, the Board of Foreign Missions in consultation with the Board of Reference and Counsel appointed A. E. Janzen, skilled in business and financial management, to fill that post.[56]

Third, at its September 1957 sessions, the Board of Foreign Missions drafted a proposed change for the new

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[54] Constitution, 1936, p. 23.

[55] GCY, 1936, p. 72; cf. p. 51.

[56] Janzen and Giesbrecht, We Recommend, p. 129.

Constitution of the Conference.[57] The proposal suggested an expansion in structure from one Secretary-Treasurer to a multiple "Administrative Secretariat," which would be appointed by the Board of Foreign Missions as needed. The suggested change was approved by the Conference at the historical Convention in Yarrow, British Columbia, that same year. The Board of Foreign Missions had done its homework well. It implemented the change at once by appointing A. E. Janzen as Executive Secretary-Treasurer with a multiplicity of office and administrative responsibilities. At that same meeting the Board also appointed J. B. Toews as Deputation Secretary, Field Secretary for Africa and Europe, and to be in charge of several other assignments. Both men had already served in administrative capacities for some time. But now all correspondence and field supervision was placed in their charge.

Fourth, the secretariat's enormous task and potential of power surfaced for the first time when the Executive Secretary-Treasurer presented his 1957 report to the Convention. Janzen spoke "in the name of the Administrative Secretariat" on the following topics: (a) Spiritual Harvest; (b) Threefold Effort Emphasis; (c) Production of Bibles and Christian Literature; (d) Movement of Missionaries; (e) Visit to the Fields; (f) Building Activity; (g) Relocation of Post Oak Mission; (h) Personnel and Stations; (i) Distribution of North American Missionaries by Areas; (j) Publications; (k) Statistical Summary of Foreign Missions; and (l) Financial Statements of 1955, 1956, and 1957, which included detailed financial analyses, disbursements by fields, administrative accounts and balance sheets.[58]

Fifth, the "Threefold Effort Emphasis," listed as the second point in the report, expressed the direction in which

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[57] Board of Missions, Minutes, September 21-26, 1957, p. 111.

[58] GCY, 1957, pp. 23-40.

the Secretariat was going to move in a time of new trends and transitions.

> Evangelism: The Conference interim has been characterized by a special effort on the part of the Home Board to supply a pattern for and seek to implement a procedure by means of which an attempt to evangelize on the foreign field can be done through and by the indigenous church, its pastors, evangelists, and lay witnesses.
>
> Indigenous Church: The Biblical pattern of building the indigenous church has been re-emphasized so as to enable the native church to function vigorously and meet its responsibility without being totally dependent upon the mission for its existence spiritually, organizationally, functionally and financially.
>
> Training Program: A new attempt has been launched to promote a uniform Bible School Training Program on our various fields in order to meet the alarming shortage of trained national workers for the churches, schools and others [sic] areas of service.[59]

The statements of the threefold emphasis raise a number of questions when taken in context of the larger report.

1. Which "indigenous church" was meant "to evangelize on the foreign field?" Did it mean the church in India, which was by then moving into its third generation and thus was the oldest MB Church outside of the Soviet Union and North America? Or did it include all the younger churches--some of which were still in their infancy--which had emerged in various countries as a result of mission efforts?

2. The Secretary reported that during the past Conference interim more than 3,000 souls had been baptized and added to the church in foreign countries. He called this "a dividend and investment for time and eternity!" Would this not indicate that the "indigenous church"--at least in some "foreign lands"--was already evangelizing, or were the newly baptized members simply the result of missionary labors?

3. The Secretary also reported of a "movement of 156 missionaries," including fifty-nine who had been newly commissioned and thirty-nine who had returned to the field during the interim. At the same time, forty-five had come home for furlough, eight had retired, and five had withdrawn from service. Is it reasonable to assume that such an increased

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[59] GCY, 1957, p. 24.

missionary force would contribute to the indigenization of national leaders?[60] Would the presence of expatriates not rather imply retardation of the indigenization process?

4. The statement in itself must be viewed as a commendable effort on the part of the mission administration to enhance the indigenization process. But what was the role of the young church in that process? Does the statement not reflect heavily a kind of unilateral action as "a special effort on the part of the Home Board?" Can that really be seen,--as the statement claims--to be "the Biblical pattern of building the indigenous church?"[61]

5. From today's perspective, the language of the statement reflects more a spirit of paternalism than of "Partnership in Obedience." Yet the Brethren were obviously anxious to overcome those colonial vestiges of the past and strive towards trends of the present. That is why the Secretary assured the Conference (a) that the mission administration was "keeping abreast with great changes in missionary technique"; and (b) that it was also "conveying to the national churches abroad the assurance that we are one great Brotherhood in Christ regardless of race, color, custom or language."[62] Despite such claim, did the Secretary understand the implications of the issue of "Partnership in Obedience" which the International Missionary Council had raised to the level of universal consciousness at its conference in Whitby ten years earlier? Or was he merely trying to sort out the issues which began to confront the Mennonite Brethren at a time when tensions were mounting and missions were facing increased crises on a global scale?

Sixth, in 1960 the Board of Foreign Missions enlarged the Administrative Secretariat by creating the position of a Secretary of Finance. This meant that the awesome title of the Executive Secretary-Treasurer had to be changed. He was

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[60] GCY, 1957, pp. 25, 22.

[61] GCY, 1957, p. 29.

[62] GCY, p. 25.

no longer Treasurer, but the "Executive Secretary," and his workload was adjusted accordingly. Here, then, lies the structural foundation for an entirely new philosophy in Mennonite Brethren mission organization and management, consisting of an administrative and an executive branch. The Administrative Secretariat was appointed and placed in the home office in Hillsboro, Kansas (since the late 1970s also in Winnipeg, Manitoba); the managing board, called the "Board of Foreign Missions" (1936-1960), was given executive power by virtue of being elected by the Conference. The next Constitution of 1963 spelled it out this way:

> The organization of the Board provides for a chairman, assistant chairman, recording secretary, and an appointed Administrative Secretariat. The rights and duties of each of the administrative secretaries shall be defined by the Board at the time of their employment. Additional personnel may be provided by the Board according to need.[63]

This new philosophy allowed the Administrative Secretariat, particularly the Executive Secretary, to wield enormous power both in formulating policies and in making decisions with regard to personnel, mission philosophy, and strategy planning. Potentially--depending on how informed, alert and sensitive the legislative Board was in terms of missiological trends and historical realities--the Executive Secretary could present recommendations with such enthusiastic persuasiveness that the Board would be so convinced of their indisputable value that it could do nothing less than endorse each proposal.

Finally, the structural relationship of the Administrative Secretariat in the home office to the Committees of Missionaries, called "Field Commissions" or "Missionary Councils,"[64] also contributed to centralization of power. Whereas the 1936 Constitution assigned greater management responsibilities to this body of missionaries than the document of 1909 had done, the revisions of 1954 and 1957

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[63] Constitution, 1963 (final rev.), p. 59; cf. pp. 34-35; also Constitution, rev. ed. 1954, pp. 37-43; Constitution, 1957, pp. 38-39.

[64] Cf. Konstitution, 1909, p. 8; Constitution, 1936, p. 26; Constitution, 1954, p. 42.

reflect a lessening of authority for this organization. By the time the New Constitution was adopted in 1963, there was no mention of any field committees or commissions or councils that could in any way encumber the direction set by the Secretariat and the decisions made by the Board. Instead, there were now Missionary Fellowships which were restricted to field concerns only, and whose officers were appointed by the Board of Missions and not by missionaries on the field, as had formerly been the case.[65] The reason for this radical shift is not entirely clear. But it appears that the organization as it had formerly existed posed a threat to the formation of true "partnership in obedience," which by then had become a primary concern of the Executive Secretary. In a "Statement to the Brotherhood from the Board of Missions," he declared, among other things, "a revolutionary world also demands revolutionary changes in missions."[66] Was the discontinuation of the long-standing managerial Field Commissions a part of the "revolutionary changes?" It appears that way. Whatever the motivations may have been, the action did not reduce the tensions; it heightened them.

Levels of Decision Making

The philosophy of administration and organization has remained essentially unchanged in the current structure, with three levels of decision-making power.

The first level is the Administrative Secretariat which is appointed by the Board and is composed of the General (formerly Executive) Secretary and the Associate Secretaries. Its decision-making jurisdiction is theoretically confined to such matters as, for example, assigning itinerant church ministries to missionaries on furlough, appointing short-term workers, and making emergency field replacements. In

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[65] See the Constitutions of 1954, p. 42; 1957, pp. 38-39; and 1963, p. 26.

[66] [J. B. Toews], Mennonite Brethren Missions Today: A Statement to the Brotherhood from the Board of Missions (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Missions, 1962), p. 9.

actuality, however, its sphere of influence on major decisions may be much broader and more consequential, depending on the nature of the recommendations it brings to the Board and the manner in which it presents them.

The second level of decision making is the Board, which has executive power commensurate with the duties and responsibilities outlined in the By-Laws.[67] The final authority, however, rests with the Conference, which can accept or reject or modify or table any recommendation presented to it by the Board at the triennial Convention.

An Idea Aborted

It has become evident by now that the era of trends and transitions (1936-1963) was in terms of mission thinking a very fertile and creative period in Mennonite Brethren history. This also became evident when the Board of Foreign Missions brought several innovative recommendations before the 1960 Centennial Convention in Reedley for Conference ratification. Recommendation III had to do specifically with a new name for the Board, and reads thus:

> In consideration of the changing world circumstances, and in consideration of the co-labor relationship of the Mennonite Brethren Church from North America with Mennonite Brethren Churches in other lands, the Board of Foreign Missions recommends that the Conference authorize the change of name from "The Board of Foreign Missions of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America" to the "Board of World Missions of the Mennonite Brethren Church."[68]

This was an intriguing idea: a "Board of World Missions" for the Mennonite Brethren Conference! But the delegates were not ready to accept it. They referred the recommendation to the Constitution Committee, the "legal" body of the Conference, and asked for an alternative motion. The result was a compromise, deleting the words "foreign" and "North America" from the longer name, and calling the new board, "Board of Missions

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[67] "By-Laws of Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services," rev. ed., 1980, pp. 1-2. (Xeroxed.)

[68] GCY, 1960, p. 98.

of the Mennonite Brethren Church."[69] Thus the idea of an international mission structure was aborted before it could be born. This is probably the most devastating single decision the Conference has ever made with regard to its own mission program. But this is an issue which I will address in Chapters 12 and 13.

Transitions at Home

During this time of transition and tension there was also a significant shift in the structures of home and city missions. While the separate boards were maintained for these aspects of work under General Conference auspices through the 1950s, the new Constitution defined them in a new way. "By home missions," said the statement, "is meant evangelization, city missions, and the establishing of churches and missions in the homeland."[70] While there was still a Committee on Home Missions, its structure had had little to do with evangelism. According to the 1963 Constitution, this "Committee shall consist of a statistician elected by the Conference . . . and of the chairman or secretaries of the U.S.A. District Home Mission Boards and the chairman or secretaries of the Canadian Provincial Home Mission Boards."[71] This raises a critical question: Does not the task of the Board on Home Missions--which consists of collecting statistics--stand in direct contradiction to the definition of Home mission which means evangelism, city mission, and church planting in the homeland? What strange rhetoric!

By 1963, the Mennonite Brethren had both philosophically and structurally so compartmentalized their mission vision at the General Conference level that they could see only the "world out there." By delegating what they called "home missions" to the district conferences and by eliminating "city missions" altogether, the Conference leadership as well as the

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[69] GCY, 1960, p. 154.

[70] Constitution, 1963, pp. 34-35.

[71] Constitution, 1963, p. 67.

bulk of church membership could perceive primarily "foreign missions." Such structural shifts only reinforced the geography syndrome which had been in the making for many years; the world was divided, the "heathen" being in distant lands, far removed from "sinners" and "saints" at home. In reflecting on these developments, one can only wonder if and in how far such thinking has influenced Mennonite Brethren attitudes toward urban evangelism--including North America--as the great new frontier in our time. The transition from the rural to the urban setting has been made physically and geographically, but only in isolated cases philosophically and missionarily. The call to urban evangelism is there, but action is not.[72]

A Structure in the Way

This is perhaps the most appropriate time to raise the issue of social consciousness in Mennonite Brethren mission. The specific structural vehicle designed to carry out the social mandate is best known as "The Board of General Welfare and Public Relations." This Board as well as its precursors worked side by side--but not always hand in hand--with the various mission organizations. Its objectives were not consistently clear and its purposes were often misunderstood. It was a board on the way, frequently changing; sometimes it was a board in the way, frequently challenged. But its rise, development, nature and demise fall into the parameters of Mennonite Brethren mission thinking.

Although ever since 1884 the Conference had made provisions for relief offerings, had gathered special funds for distressed and needy, and had organized committees to assist the hungry, the refugees, and those in search of new

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[72] Henry J. Schmidt, "The Urban Ethos: Building Churches in a Pagan Environment," Mission Focus 8 (June 1980), 26-33; Edmund Janzen, "The Church and the Urban Frontier," in Church, Word and World, addresses given to the Clearbrook Study Conference, May 10 and 11, 1974 ([Winnipeg]: Mennonite Brethren Herald, 1974), pp. 30-39.

homes,[73] it was not until 1924 that an official Hilfskomitee or Relief Committee of seven members was elected to meet a specific need.[74] The records show that this Committee was still active in 1936,[75] and three years later merged with the Peace Committee. Further amalgamations in 1943 gave shape to the Komitee für Wehrfrage und Hilfswerk,[76] but retained the popular designation as Hilfskomitee. Because of its high level of interest for the welfare of the Mennonites settled in Paraguay, this committee entered the same territory in which the Board of Foreign Missions was already at work.[77]

The earliest visits to the Mennonites in Paraguay were initiated by the Conference, but carried out by the Hilfskomitee. In 1933 the Conference approved a recommendation of sending a "preacher-brother of the Conference to South America in order to break spiritual bread for the brothers and sisters over there."[78] Three years later at the 1936 Convention in Reedley it was decided that P.C. Hiebert should be sent to Paraguay "where between 1500 and 2000 Mennonites, having come out of great tribulation, have settled and already pioneered under harsh conditions for five years."[79]

In 1943 the Hilfkomitee proposed another visit to South America. The Conference approved the recommendation that A. E. Janzen be sent there under MCC auspices "for the purpose of strengthening and helping the brethren spiritually, socially,

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[73] For a summary of the various welfare activities of the Conference see Janzen and Giesbrecht, We Recommend, pp. 64-65; GCY, 1966, pp. 39-47.

[74] GCY, 1924, p. 60; cf. pp. 56-60; 1927, pp. 51-61.

[75] GCY, 1930, pp. 55-59; 1933, pp. 54-60, 68; 1936, pp. 51-60, 72.

[76] GCY, 1939, p. 63; cf. 42-51.

[77] Cf. GCY, 1936, p. 59; 1943, p. 61; 1945, p. 24.

[78] GCY, 1933, p. 57.

[79] GCY, 1936, p. 59.

educationally and materially."[80] Such expansion of territory and philosophy also demanded an expansion of name and structure. Therefore, the Hilfkomitee became officially known as the "Committee for General Welfare and Public Relations," which in 1957 was given status of a board.[81]

The Board of General Welfare and Public Relations and its various precursors were responsible for handling the whole issue of peace and nonresistance, for relating in constructive ways to the MB churches that had emerged in Paraguay, Brazil, and Uruguay as a result of immigrants coming from Eastern Europe, and for the Christian Service Program established by the Conference in 1960 to give its young people meaningful service opportunities on the North American continent.

In a comprehensive nine-page review of history and purpose, M. A. Kroeker, long-time Secretary of South American and Relief Ministries, offered a strong defense for the existence of the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations just hours before its demise. Among other things Kroeker explained:

> While the Board of General Welfare has been a General Conference Board from its inception, this status has not always been understood. Both United States churches and Canadian churches have tended to look at the Board from their own perspective. This has had several results: The Board has accepted a number of responsibilities which were primarily of United States interest: government Selective Service clearance, Peace Sunday promotion, MDS, Mutual Aid, Mental Health, Aging, CROP, race relations. Perhaps these United States duties fell to the Board primarily because it was the only channel available.
>
> For the same reason the Canadians have often felt somewhat of a distance between them and the Board, offset by their affinity to the MCC. To differentiate our own conference programs from MCC, particularly in South America, they introduced the name Dienst am Evangelium to describe their part in the Board's activity.[82]

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[80] Janzen and Giesbrecht, We Recommend, p. 71; GCY, 1943, p. 61.

[81] Constitution, 1954, pp. 6, 61-62. There was for many years evident unclarity about the name of the Hilfskomitee. P. C. Hiebert referred to it already in 1943 as "the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations" (GCY, 1943, pp. 58-59).

[82] GCY, 1966, pp. 46-47.

Kroeker's statement clearly implies that the relationship between this organization and the Board of Foreign Missions had not always been without tension. The conflict created no minor concern for Conference leaders and led to the 1957 resolution in Yarrow "that the three boards, [namely the] Board of Reference and Counsel, Board of Foreign Missions, and Board of Welfare, recommend a procedure of reorganization and function of the Board of Welfare before the end of the next two years of the Conference interim."[83]

Metaphorically speaking, the Yarrow resolution was like a sharp axe lifted and aimed at the roots. The handwriting was on the wall, clearly predicting that whenever the axe would fall, its blow would be fatal to the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations.

Concerns and Crises 1963-1969

Although I am dealing with a period of history covering less than a decade, it was a time of intense concerns, some reaching crisis proportions. Here I am concerned only with actions related directly to mission structure. Issues of greater theological and philosophical substance will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

The Conference records of this time depict some of the most dramatic structural alterations in MB mission history since 1910. Several areas were directly affected.

An Administrative Crisis

The constitutional revisions and amendments adopted in 1963 had made provision for the appointment of an Administrative Secretariat, including the General Secretary, the Treasurer or Secretary of Finance, and assistant or associate secretaries as needed.[84] A. E. Janzen, who had served as a top-level administrator since 1945, had resigned as Treasurer in 1960 and assumed responsibility in the area of historical

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[83] GCY, 1957, p. 118; cf. pp. 98-104.

[84] For a job description of the Secretariat at this time, see Janzen and Giesbrecht, We Recommend, p. 140.

research. His departure left the treasury in the hands of Peter Funk, the newly appointed Secretary of Finance. In 1963, the General Secretary, the Assistant General Secretary, and Janzen as researcher/writer all resigned at the same time.[85] This created an unprecedented leadership crisis and called for expeditious and prudent action on the part of the Board of Missions in appointing a new Secretariat. The Board enlarged the administrative team to four: a General Secretary, an Associate General Secretary, a Minister of Deputation, and the Secretary of Finance, who had already been in office since 1960.[86]

It was evident from the outset that the new Secretariat would be hard pressed to match what one might call "prophetic vision" combined with "apostolic authority," and the overall administrative proficiency of previous secretarial executives like Lohrenz, Janzen and Toews. At the same time, while the new Secretariat had not yet been able to demonstrate a high level of efficiency, the Board--particularly its executive--rose to the challenge of responsibility, if not to the exercise of authority. There was an almost complete shift in the exercise of authority from the 1950s to the 1960s. Whereas the previous Administrative Secretariat had been effectively creative and directional in decision making for the Board of Missions, the present Secretariat was less aggressive, allowing the Board to reverse the order and assume administrative responsibilities in addition to its assigned legislative and executive functions.

A rather fascinating incident surfaced in the infra-structural relationship between the Board and the Secretariat at the 1966 Convention at Corn. While in previous as well as

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[85] It should be noted that the reasons for resignation were legitimate: General Secretary J. B. Toews assumed the presidency of the MB Biblical Seminary in Fresno; his associate John C. Ratzlaff accepted a pastorate in Hillsboro; A. E. Janzen had reached "retirement age"--but he is still (1986) active in research and writing on MB mission. Cf. GCY, 1960, p. 65; 1963, p. 58.

[86] GCY, 1966, pp. 57, 95.

subsequent Conventions it was customary that the Chairman of the Board and the Executive (General) Secretary each bring a report to the assembled delegates, at this Convention these two officers were most conspicuous by the few words they spoke. Instead, the Secretary of the Board almost single-handedly presided over the mission sessions and presented a long report; he even read short statements prepared by the members of the new Administrative Secretariat.[87] An unusual procedure, indeed.

A careful reading of the report leads to the assumption that the new Secretariat appointed by the Board was either inadequately prepared to deal with the issues in world mission of that time, or that the Board lacked adequate confidence in the Secretariat's competence. Implications in this structure, procedure, and tone of the report point to the latter. Whatever the case may have been, a twofold conclusion presses itself upon us. On the one hand the Board, particularly its executive component, not only seems to have assumed administrative responsibilities that were beyond its call of duty, but also to have exercised authority beyond its defined sphere of jurisdiction. This may have been necessary to compensate for a perceived lack of competence of the Secretariat. On the other hand, such bold action on the part of the Board could only intimidate the Secretariat and thereby suppress the development of its administrative potential. Be that as it may, the evident efforts of the new Secretariat to follow the course of its predecessors while at the same time seeking to be creative and constructive in vision and strategy are only praiseworthy. Its tenure, however, was too short to demonstrate its competency.

Organizational Concern

At its October meetings in 1964, the Board of Missions appointed a committee with the specific assignment "to study the principle of organizing the Board into commissions

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[87] GCY, 1966, pp. 56-107.

and . . . basic principles to govern commissions of the Board."[88] The committee presented a "resolution on Commissions," clearly delineating principles of operation, purpose, division, structure, and duties. To meet existing needs, the Board appointed six commissions[89] (Figure 5).

While the primary purpose of these commissions was consultative in nature, each was to serve as an agency on behalf of the Board. Their task was "to study, advise in and supervise the development of interest in its specific foreign mission assignment within one brotherhood as an important channel for the dissemination of the gospel in this time of great opportunities."[90]

Judging from the reports presented to the Board of Missions at its February meeting in 1965, the commissions had taken their assignments seriously and done an enormous amount of work between Board sessions.[91] Yet they had overlooked one thing: an emerging concern of crucial urgency made it clear that there was no vehicle to deal with the delicate relationship between Board and missionary. Thus a special Commission on Policy and Strategy was established and charged with the rather vague assignment of "further studies on our mission program."[92] The Commission assigned G. W. Peters to prepare a document on "Board-Missionary Relationship" which the Board then took up and minutely discussed "point by point."[93]

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[88] Board of Missions, Minutes, September 29-October 2, 1964, p. 19.

[89] The resolution of the study committee listed only five commissions to the Board, but in actuality six were appointed (Board of Missions, Minutes, September-October 1964, pp. 20-21).

[90] Board of Missions, Minutes, September-October 1964, p. 20.

[91] Board of Missions, Minutes, February 23-26, 1965, pp. 16-34; Board of Missions, Agenda, pp. 6-31, passim.

[92] Board of Missions, Minutes, February 1965, p. 14.

[93] Board of Missions, Minutes, February 1965, p. 35; see document, Agenda, February 1965, pp. 38-39.

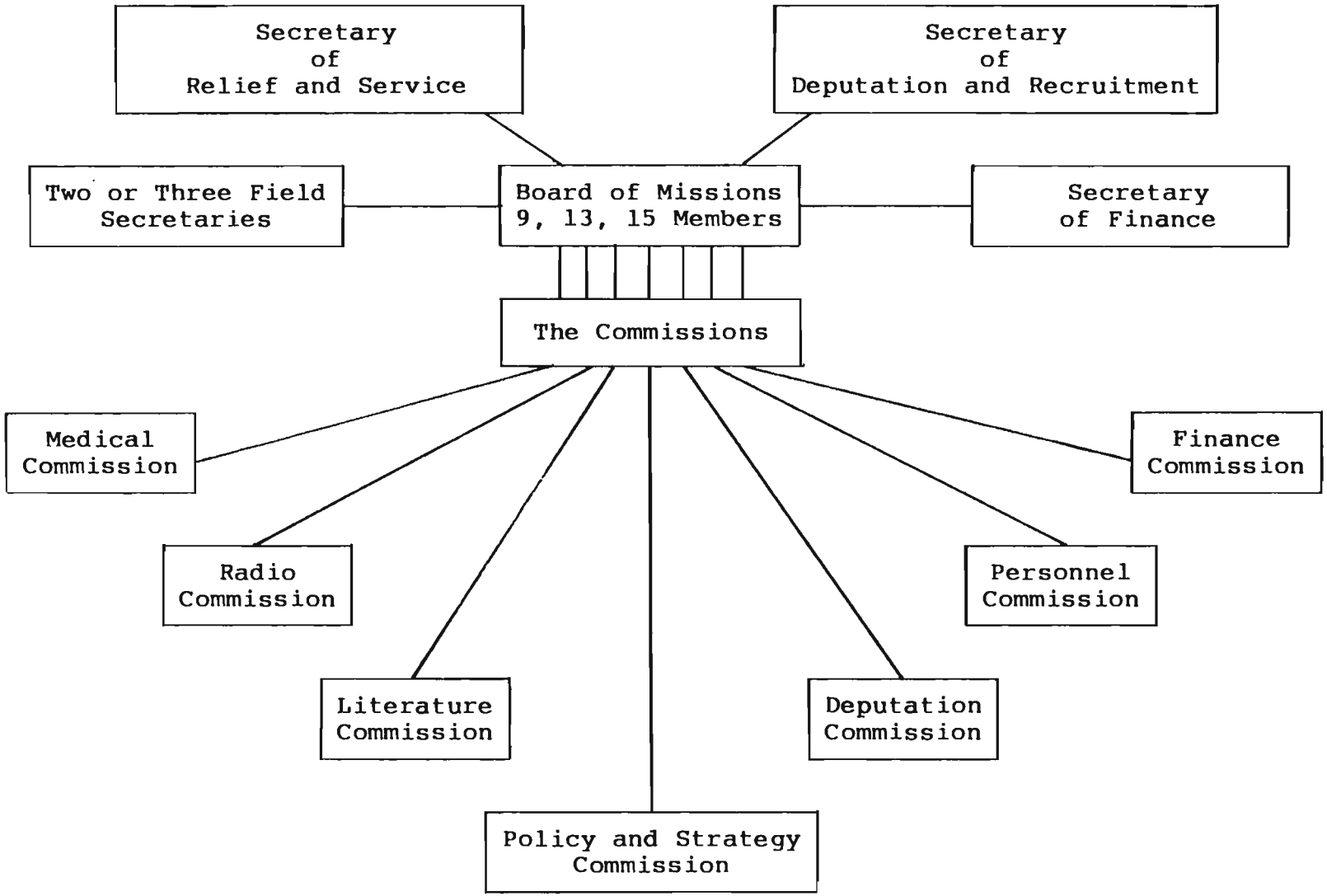

Figure 5

Board of Missions with Commissions for the 1960s

The important point here is that the administrative Secretariat together with the legislative Board created structures to deal with concerns and crises; and it seems that Mennonite Brethren mission experienced a double measure of them during this short period from 1963-1969.

Two Become One

Another issue of real concern for the Conference was that the Board of Missions and the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations not only worked side by side, but in some cases even duplicated interests and activities.[94] The issue was referred to the Board of Reference and Counsel, which drew up a "Statement of Principles," proposing the merger of the two mission arms of the Conference and integration of all missional concerns as one "total ministry." "We are steadfast in the conviction," said the statement, "that the Gospel is intended to meet the total needs of man--spiritual, social, material or other basic human needs--but that every ministry follows from the responsibility to give priority to man's spiritual need, his alienation from God and his need for redemption through Jesus Christ." The statement went on to say that the "brotherhood represents the conviction that proclamation and welfare ministries ought to be integrated." Therefore, the Board of Reference and Counsel recommended at the Convention in Corn, Oklahoma, that the Board of Missions and the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations merge to form one board under the new name of "Board of Missions and Services."[95]

Such a radical recommendation called for radical reorganization of the only two MB structures that affected the whole world in their ministry. Neither Board was enthusiastic about the proposal, and the marriage was pronounced in a somber Convention atmosphere without applause. The Board of General Welfare and Public Relations and the

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[94] GCY, 1966, p. 22; cf. GCY, 1957, p. 118.

[95] GCY, 1966, p. 23.

Board of Missions were no more. The new Board of Missions and Services was now charged to do what the two former boards had sought to carry out in the past. This included such Conference programs as (a) "foreign missions" in the traditional sense of the term; (b) social services wherever needs arose on the international scene; (c) assistance ministries to existing churches, particularly in Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay; and (d) Christian Service in hospitals and other institutions both domestically and internationally. The last program became a critical issue because of its focus on domestic needs.

Another issue was of international concern and led to structural frustrations. The merger of the two boards came at a time when such slogans as "partnership in obedience"[96] and "equality and mutuality"[97] between the sending churches and the younger churches made headlines in missiological literature. Mennonite Brethren mission executives interpreted this to mean that the Conference and its member congregations were not only "laborers together with God" as always had been assumed; a new dimension of partnership "with our national brethren" was now to become a reality.[98] At a time in history when indigeneity and autonomy of the younger churches was a priority item on the mission agenda of international concern,[99] the Mennonite Brethren were not about to disregard or ignore such an

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[96] In 1963 the Conference adopted a major document entitled, "Obedience in Partnership," in which mission trends were clearly spelled out. See GCY, 1963, pp. 95-96.

[97] See Recommendation #2, GCY, 1966, pp. 104-106.

[98] GCY, 1960, p. 49.

[99] Peter Beyerhaus and Henry Lefever, The Responsible Church and the Foreign Mission (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964). This study offers an excellent analysis of the independence movement governed by the principles of indigeneity. Cf. Peter Beyerhaus, "The Three Selves Formula--Is It Based on Biblical Foundations?" International Review of Mission 53 (1964), 393-407. Mennonite Brethren awareness of these global issues is best reflected in the 1962 publication, Toews, Mennonite Brethren Missions Today, pp. 7-13.

important issue as partnership.[100] But how could it be implemented, or even enforced, if necessary? The question was resolved much more quickly and easily at the administrative and legislative levels in North America than at the pragmatic level in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. But, as already indicated, that is a relational issue which I will treat more fully in Chapters 12 and 13.

Board Enlargement

At the Convention in Winnipeg in 1963, it was decided that the Board should be enlarged from nine to thirteen members. Three reasons were given for that shift: (a) the ever-expanding MB mission program; (b) the advisability of sharing managerial and operational responsibilities with an increased number of people in the Conference; and (c) the internal need of the Board for a more effective organization of its working commissions to assume responsibility for specific areas of the mission task.

The recommendation also spelled out clear stipulations as to eligibility of membership in this enlarged Board to guarantee fair representation. First, in relation to geographic regions and area conference, this meant that the Pacific, Central, and Southern District Conferences in the United States should have two members each, and that in Canada the Provincial Conferences of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario should have at least one member each. Second, there was concern that the members should be "selected from the ranks of pastors, ministers, [and] lay brethren." Finally, the two theological schools--the MB Bible College in Winnipeg and the MB Biblical Seminary in Fresno--should each supply one consultative member.[101]

In keeping with the organizational principles, suggested

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[100] Cf. GCY, 1963, pp. 95-96; 1966, pp. 105-106; Guiding Principles and Policies of Mennonite Brethren Church Missions, 3rd ed. (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Missions, 1963), p. 13; Toews, Mennonite Brethren Missions Today, pp. 7-13.

[101] GCY, 1963, pp. 94-95; GCY, 1966, p. 57.

earlier, the new Board organized itself into "six functional commissions," listed as:

> (a) Deputation Commission, (b) Finance Commission, (c) Literature Commission, (d) Policy Commission, (e) Personnel Commission, and (f) Radio Commission. The principle prevails that these commissions are neither legislative or administrative, but rather counseling and recommending bodies.[102]

No explanation is given why the Medical Commission was here omitted (Figure 5, p. 387).

Operational Questions

After the merger of the two boards, the Board of Missions and Services had to assume structural responsibility for the predominantly domestic Christian Service program, formerly under the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations. This raised a host of philosophical questions which demanded endless hours of discussions both at the Board level and on the Convention floor. G. W. Peters has highlighted some of these questions:

> While many rejoiced over the acceptance of the program, several matters came up for repeated discussion: Is it wise for a Board which has its major field of operation outside of the United States and Canada to administer and relate itself to a large Christian service program at home? Is there the danger that short-term service may become a substitute for the missionary calling and actually keep young people from entering full-time missionary service? Is it wise for a Board with the main objective of evangelism and church planting to sponsor a large Christian service program which in its essence is not evangelism and church ministry (although certainly good in itself and indirectly contributing toward such ministries? These are questions which surfaced in the Board. It must be emphasized that the value of Christian Service has never been questioned, but the sponsorship of such a program on the home front by the Board has been seriously discussed.[103]

Both Peters' questions and concluding comments are again a profound confirmation that the Mennonite Brethren do not think in terms of world mission; authentic mission is foreign, not domestic. The Board of Missions and Services is still

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[102] GCY, 1966, p. 57.

[103] Peters, Foundations, p. 100.

seen--and sees itself--only as a foreign mission agency.

Financial Crisis

The era under discussion began with administrative concerns and ended with a financial crisis.[104] Although this crisis was not directly related to structure, it did have at least one organizational implication. The monetary problem became the occasion for the Board of Trustees to look into the matter and undertake a thorough study of the actual financial strengths and weaknesses of the Board of Missions and Services.[105] This critical review by the trustees resulted in a restructuring of the total financial program, "something which should have happened years earlier."[106] But this is an issue which structurally falls into the next organizational period; philosophically it has already been treated at some length in the previous chapter.

Realignment and Reorganization 1968-1984

Mennonite Brethren mission in the seventies can be most accurately described as a decade of realignment and reassignment.

A New General Secretary

In August of 1968, Vernon R. Wiebe was appointed General Secretary of Missions and Services, a position he held until September 1982. It would be fair to say that he expressed his administrative strengths more in relational skills than in operational strategy, and that his missiological orientation appeared stronger in the social sciences than in the theological disciplines. One student calls Wiebe "an eclectic,"

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[104] See the financial report to the Conference, GCY, 1969, pp. 76-81 and the special "Work Sheet on Financial Solutions," GCY, 1969, pp. 83-84.

[105] GCY, 1969, p. 48.

[106] Peters, Foundations, p. 101.

but quickly adds that "at the same time there was an organizing principle in his mission philosophy."[107]

Wiebe's focus was primarily on people and only secondarily on programs. "Our ministry of missions and services depends on people," he declared at the 1978 Convention in Buhler, Kansas. "We tend to look for better methods and strategies, but God looks for people who see Christ's mission as their mission."[108] This was the tone of Wiebe's entire Administrative tenure.

A Vision for Reorganization

While the decade of the 1970s was organizationally not as dynamic and volatile as that of the 1960s had been, some of the changes had far-reaching consequences. The reason lay as much in the mood of the times and the conditions of MB mission as in the chief executive's philosophy of leadership. The time had come for restoration, reconstruction, and realignment--even for reconciliation--of what might have been disjointed earlier. But that did not simply mean turning back the clock; rather, it meant using what was available to serve God in foreign missions.

During the early months in office, the General Secretary presented to the Board of Missions and Services what he called a "Chart of Responsibilities" in which he outlined his vision for the organization of the working force in the administrative office (Figure 6).[109] Several observations are imperative.

For one thing, the chart reflects concern that every aspect of the home base be adequately covered. Yet there was a significant shift: The Board Commissions were replaced by Staff Assignments (Figure 5, p. 387 above). Wiebe called it "streamlining." "Experience has taught us," he said, "that we

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[107] David J. Falk, "Vernon R. Wiebe and Mennonite Brethren Mission," unpublished term paper, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, 1984, p. 1.

[108] GCY, 1978, p. 67.

[109] Adapted from Wiebe's "Chart of Responsibilities," January 15, 1969; Board of Missions/Services, Agenda, February 28-March 4, 1969, A-7 and 8; cf. GCY, 1969, p. 47.

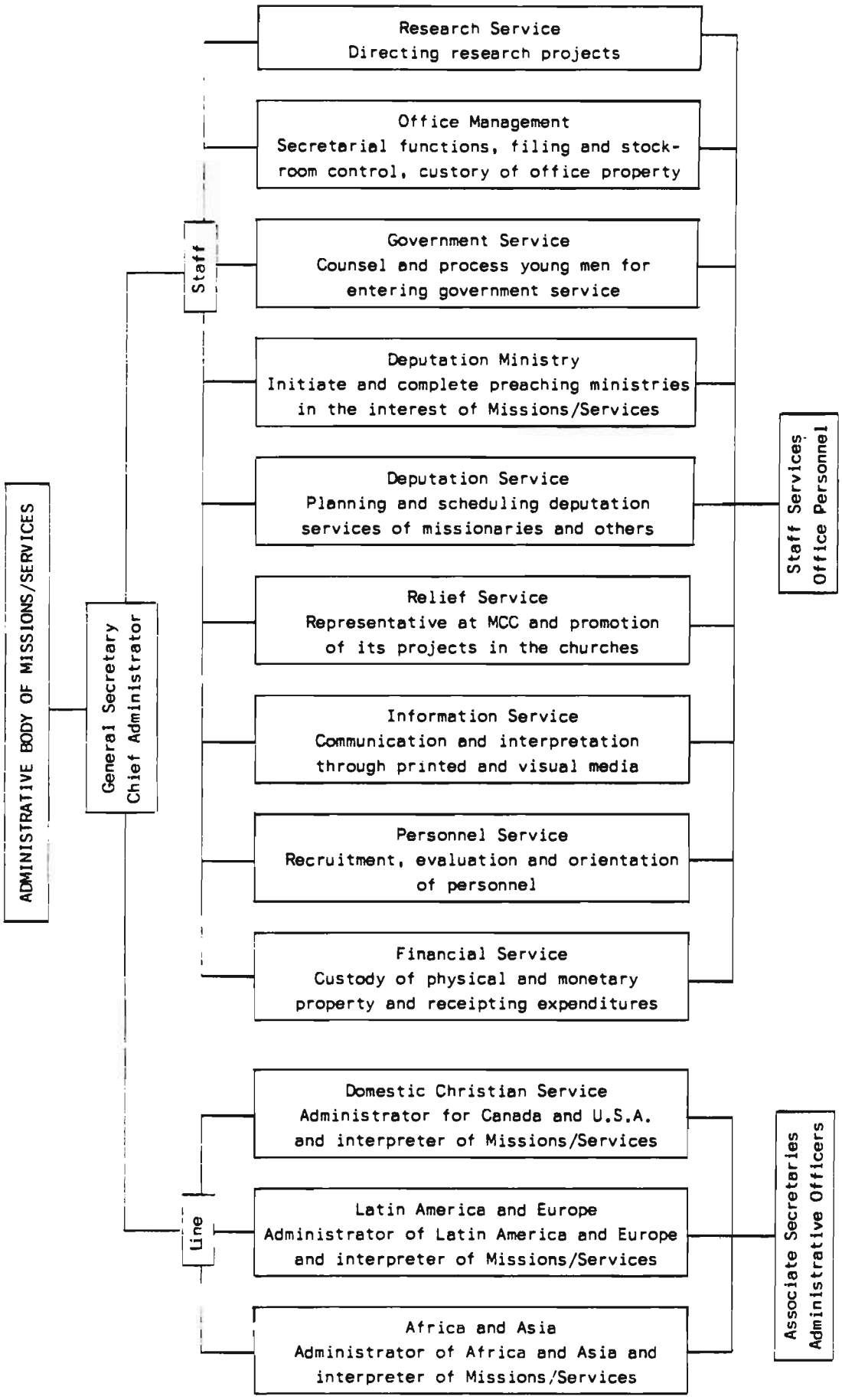
ADMINISTRATIVE BODY OF MISSIONS/SERVICES
General Secretary
Chief Administrator
Staff
Line
Research Service
Directing research projects
Office Management
Secretarial functions, filing and stock-room control, custory of office property
Government Service
Counsel and process young men for entering government service
Deputation Ministry
Initiate and complete preaching ministries in the interest of Missions/Services
Deputation Service
Planning and scheduling deputation services of missionaries and others
Relief Service
Representative at MCC and promotion of its projects in the churches
Information Service
Communication and interpretation through printed and visual media
Personnel Service
Recruitment, evaluation and orientation of personnel
Financial Service
Custody of physical and monetary property and receipting expenditures
Staff Services
Office Personnel
Domestic Christian Service
Administrator for Canada and U.S.A. and interpreter of Missions/Services
Latin America and Europe
Administrator of Latin America and Europe and interpreter of Missions/Services
Africa and Asia
Administrator of Africa and Asia and interpreter of Missions/Services
Associate Secretaries
Administrative Officers

Figure 6

Wiebe's Chart of Responsibilities 1969

can streamline without losing effectiveness." Although he conceded that the Commissions or "Area Committees" as he preferred to call them, had "served their purpose well," the time had now come "to eliminate them." His idea was to replace them by "non-board members" who would be experts in given areas of service.[110]

Furthermore, the chart also shows that the General Secretary was in charge of the entire mission administration, covering both Associate Secretaries and Staff Services. This realignment was a radical shift from the 1960s. While the previous administration had been largely controlled by the Executive of the Board of Missions and Services, the new Secretariat, especially the General Secretary, assumed a much more aggressive role. Such realignment during this period, wrote one of the former secretaries of BOMAS, "has affected the total framework and philosophy of Mennonite Brethren Missions. It radically changed the structure of missions in the area of operations, the nature of assignments and the placing of responsibilities for the work."[111]

Moreover, it must be noted from the chart that the new administration honored the expanded scope of service brought about by the merger of the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations and the Board of Missions in 1966. While two Associate Secretaries of the new structure were assigned to administer the foreign mission components, one had the responsibility for the Domestic Christian Service program for Canada and the United States. It may be recalled that this program had been implemented by the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations in 1960, but was now administrated by the Board of Missions and Services.[112]

Finally, two pertinent observations reflect as much on

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[110] Board of Missions/Services, Agenda, February 29-March 4, 1969, A-3 and 4.

[111] Peters, Foundations, p. 101. Cf. the role G. W. Peters assumed as Secretary of the Board of Missions at the Convention in Corn (GCY, 1966, pp. 56-61).

[112] Cf. GCY, 1969, p. 47.

the philosophical as on the structural aspects of reorganization. This would have been the appropriate occasion to move deliberately and permanently from "foreign missions" to world mission. Structurally it could have been possible. Philosophically, however, neither the Board of Missions and Services nor the Conference as a whole were ready to abandon their traditional view of foreign missions in favor of inclusive world mission. Thus at the March 1977 Board session it was decided "that the domestic Christian Service and Good News Corps programs be transferred to a domestic agency and/or phased out by May 31, 1980."[113] While the Christian Service component has in part been transferred to a regional agency for domestic ministries, and in part to the Board of Missions and Services for foreign ministries, the Good News Corps program is entirely in the hands of Missions and Services, with exclusive concern for foreign mission.

It is also instructive to note that the 1969 proposal for total administrative reorganization, which included elimination of the Commissions, was significantly modified, if not almost reversed, the following year. The minutes of the May 1970 Board sessions record decisions (a) that four commissions be retained for research and advisory purposes; (b) that these commissions be assigned to the areas of finances, policies, communications, and personnel; (c) that the chairmen of these four commissions constitute an executive committee; (d) that the chairmen be appointed by the Board; and (e) that the chairman of the Board of Missions and Services be the chairman of the Executive Committee and ex-officio member of each commission.[114] Thus the decision-making authority was back with the Administrative Secretariat.

Expansion by Division

At the May 1970 Board sessions, the Secretariat presented the following recommendation:

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[113] M.B. Board of Missions/Services, Resolutions, Vol. II, 1966-1978, p. 53.

[114] M.B. Board of Missions/Services, Resolutions, Vol. II, p. 14.

> We recommend that the Board give serious consideration to relocate the administrative center of the Board of Missions/Services to a metropolitan area with priority consideration to the constituency relationship.[115]

The rationale for this recommendation carried significant weight and was repeated at the Board sessions the following year:

> The world which we serve is urban. More and better services can be purchased in metropolitan areas. There is greater possibility of cooperation and coordination with other mission societies. Considering these facts, it was agreed that a new location should be found for home office.[116]

The Board appointed a commission to study the feasibility of both office expansion and/or relocation. By 1978 there was strong administrative pressure, yet insufficient consensus among Board members, to bring a recommendation before the Conference for official ratification: (a) that the mission office in Hillsboro be divided in two parts; (b) that the administrative function be moved to Winnipeg; and (c) that the U.S. desk be relocated in Fresno. For all practical purposes, however, the administration was already operating in Hillsboro and Winnipeg before 1978.[117] Three years later the Chairman of the Board of Missions and Services at the 1981 Convention in St. Catharines, Ontario, stated: "During the triennium [1978-1981] we have maintained two offices in Hillsboro, Kansas and Winnipeg, Manitoba. While such an arrangement is perhaps less than ideal, it did prove to be workable."[118]

The Present Model 1984

With the appointment of Victor Adrian as the new General Secretary in 1983 and his move to the Winnipeg office, the vision expressed by the former General Secretary in the 1970s

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[115] Board of Missions/Services, Minutes, May 1970, p. 27.

[116] Board of Missions/Services, Minutes, 1971, p. 6.

[117] GCY, 1978, p. 67.

[118] GCY, 1981, p. 98.

for a more efficient administrative arrangement is gradually being realized in the 1980s, but not without the Commissions (Figure 7).

At present, Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services are managed from two offices, with the main Administrative Secretariat in Winnipeg and two Secretariat desks still in Hillsboro.

The areas that are most sensitive and of greatest concern for the Board of Missions and Services touching the whole matter of mission management in the 1980s are relational in nature. Vernon Wiebe was right: Mennonite Brethren mission is people more than programs. Therefore, relationships between people both internal and external have received a considerable amount of attention, as I will show in Chapter 12.

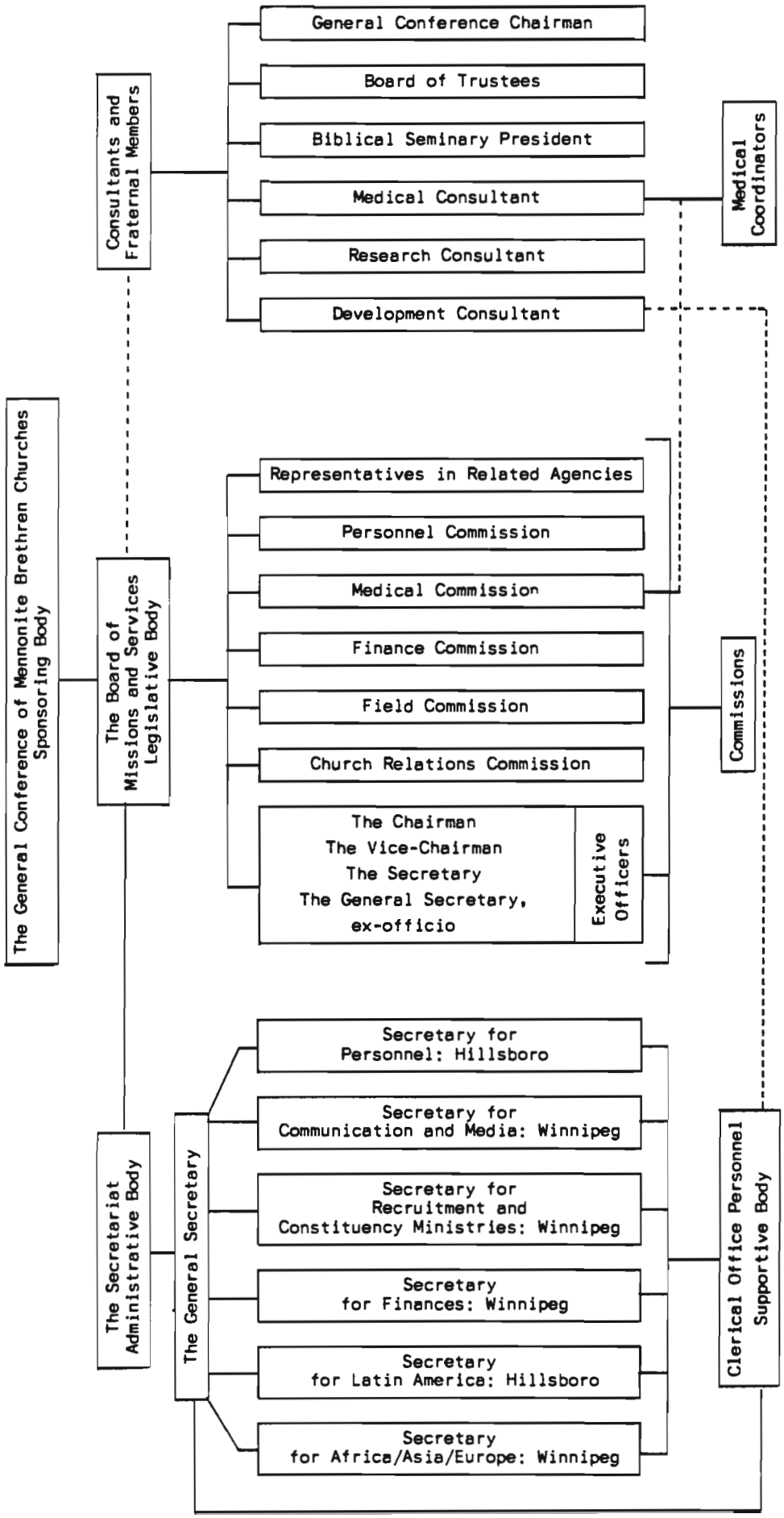

Figure 7

Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services 1984

Chapter 10

MISSION THINKING PUT TO ACTION

Introduction

There is nothing magic about the year 1885, except that it was at the Convention of that year that the American Mennonite Brethren took decisive action in foreign mission. They began expressing their missionary nature in missionary action, which in turn shaped their understanding and thinking of mission. In retrospect, the directions in which they moved and the actions which they took are less difficult to trace than to interpret. But in this chapter I want to do both--delineate the philosophy while describing the history. Since all discussions and dialogue about mission on the Conference level as well as in committees and boards were carried out in the German language until the 1940s in the United States--and even longer than that in Canada--I have chosen to use the vocabulary in vogue at the time when all major missionary programs were launched. Therefore, I will focus here on (a) äußere Mission and innere Mission; (b) Heidenmission and Indianermission; (c) Stadtmission and Judenmission; (d) Kindermission and Randmission; and finally, (e) Mission to Russians and Mexicans.

Äußere Mission and Innere Mission

Such terms as "foreign missions" and "home missions," or "overseas missions" and "domestic missions," are still widely used. Historically, "home missions" and "domestic missions" are designations for evangelistic and social ministries among people who have spiritually backslidden or are religiously and socially detached or estranged from the church, that is, from institutional Christianity. In

America and Europe it is commonly viewed as work among the dechristianized neopagan populations.[1] In contrast, "foreign missions" or "overseas missions" are terms used to describe mission work in what are traditionally viewed as "pagan lands." While the distinction may be purely functional for some, it is seen as faithfulness to the biblical mandate by others.

Small Steps Toward a Big Leap

The American Mennonite Brethren began thinking clearly about "foreign missions" and "home missions" at the 1881 Convention.[2] The specific starting point was lodged in the Conference resolution that the mission collection be designated in two equal portions, one to support Baptist work in India, and the other Mennonite Brethren work in America. Thereby the Brethren began to conceive of mission as emanating from a "double commission," as A. E. Janzen has put it. He interprets the 1881 Conference decision as a move in the right direction, saying, "From that day forward every consideration of missions has been dealt with in the light of the double commission of the church to evangelize both at home and abroad."[3]

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[1] Cf. Gustav Warneck, Evangelische Missionslehre: Ein missionstheoretischer Versuch, 2nd ed. (Gotha: Perthes, 1897), Vol. I, pp. 2-4; Josef Schmidlin, Catholic Mission Theory, trans. from Katholische Missionslehre im Grundriß (Techny, IL: Mission Press, 1931), p. 34; Martin L. Nelson, ed., Readings in Third World Missions (South Pasadena: William Carey, 1976), pp. 4-5; Alfred Krass, Evangelizing Neo-Pagan America (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1981).

[2] A. E. Janzen and Herbert Giesbrecht claim that the term innere Mission appeared in official records for the first time in 1896 (We Recommend [Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1978], p. 159). They are correct that the phrase does occur in the report of that year (GCY, 1896, p. 5) but in error that it was the first official usage. Already in 1882 we find innere Mission contrasted with äußere Mission. See "Minutes of the First Four Sessions of the M.B. General Conference 1879-1882," handwritten document, p. 67. Cf. Chapter 8, note 55 for a typed copy of this document. For reference to GCY see Chapter 8, note 22.

[3] A. E. Janzen, "The Development of Missionary Dynamic Among American Mennonite Brethren," in The Church in Mission:

In 1882, the Mennonite Brethren took another step that reinforced their earlier direction. All incoming funds from churches and private donors were henceforth divided into two treasuries. The one was called "Bundeskasze" (sic). The persons in charge assumed administrative financial responsibility for "Innere Miszion" (sic) or home mission. The other part of the treasury was known as Heidenmissionskasse, designated for "Äuszere Miszion" (sic) or foreign mission.[4] At the 1883 Convention in Nebraska it was further decided that (a) one third of the love offering should go to Heidenmission in India; (b) two thirds should flow into the Bundeskasse for the support of Reiseprediger in America; and (c) the "Missions-Comite"--the two men elected in 1879--should manage all funds.[5]

These ideas climaxed in a third step toward separation between mission in America from mission elsewhere. It all happened at the Convention of 1885 when the Brethren elected a special eight-member "Committee zur Verwaltung der Heidenmissionscasse," chaired by Cornelius Wedel. This Committee was to receive, administer, and disburse all the monies of the foreign mission treasury.[6]

Dichotomized Thinking and Action

Those three steps, ending in the election of officers who were given the specific assignment of managing the foreign mission treasury, marked the historical event in which the Mennonite Brethren philosophically and officially launched their involvement in foreign missions. At the same time they continued engaging itinerant evangelists and elders for Erweckungsarbeit or revival among Mennonites and Seelenpflege

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A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to J. B. Toews, ed. A. J. Klassen (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1967), p. 157; cf. "Minutes," pp. 48-52.

[4] "Minutes," pp. 13-14.

[5] GCY, 1883, pp. 4-7.

[6] GCY, 1885, p. 12.

or spiritual nurture among their own members. These somewhat narrow activities were commonly referred to as "home missions."[7]

Here, then, lies the embryo of the unfortunate dichotomy between "home missions" and "foreign missions," a dichotomy that has given rise to what I have earlier called a "geography syndrome": the greater the geographical distance between the sending church and the mission field, the more valid the mission involvement. The focus on the geographical frontier has been a powerful forger of mission thinking in the Western world. Within the context of such a legacy, "mission becomes mission only if it is practiced over there, far away."[8] Geographical distance has become the primary frontier which the church must cross. For the majority of Mennonite Brethren, "missions" in plural form were inevitably and primarily conceptualized as mission tasks in foreign lands, or simply foreign missions.

During those early years the Brethren faced serious problems with regard to foreign missions. (a) With a membership of only about a thousand believers, they felt numerically too weak to undertake independent mission work in a foreign land; (b) for the first ten years or so they had no candidates who qualified for overseas work; (c) their first candidate whom they supported financially to get theological training for mission became ill and could not be sent out as they had hoped; and (d) as funds were coming in, they were forced to look for alternative ways to use up the mission money responsibly without field and workers of their own.[9]

Simultaneous with foreign mission thinking, the Brethren developed their view of home mission, so that it becomes broader and more inclusive than Seelenpflege within their

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[7] Janzen, "Missionary Dynamic," p. 157; cf. GCY, 1889, special conference report, no page number given.

[8] David J. Bosch and J. J. Kritzinger, Missiology and Science of Religion, Study Guide MSR201: Theology of Mission, rev. ed. (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1980), p. 26.

[9] Janzen, "Missionary Dynamic," pp. 159, 157.

own congregation and itinerant preaching among their own ethnic kinfolk. Yet neither the philosophical nor the cultural boundaries were clearly prescribed, as the following definition given by A. H. Unruh in 1945 reflects:

> The churches of our conference have always understood home mission to mean work within the congregations for the purpose of edifying the believers and work within the immediate surrounding with the aim of converting the unconverted. In more recent times, however, the concept was broadened. First we began to include the extension ministry of our Conference under innere Mission, and then we went on to embrace selected areas in our own country where the Conference did not yet have local congregations. In such areas, home mission now means evangelization and the establishment and development of churches.[10]

On the basis of this definition, the essence of home mission varies little from that of foreign missions, except in its geographical dimension. Home mission takes place "in our own country," whereas foreign missions are geographically far removed.

The last report on record by the Committee of Home Missions with the General Conference dates back to the 1960 Centennial Convention in Reedley. It is one of the few reports by this Committee that contains real substance. It deals with programs, policies, and principles, based on "information gathered from the reports of various districts and provinces." The first paragraph states:

> Principles and policies in establishing a new work are of utmost importance. Mission stations which had their beginning as a Sunday School do not seem to outgrow that phase and develop into a mature church. Work should be begun as a Mennonite Brethren work rather than a work of an interdenominational nature. The latter delays the work and brings with it many problems when the transition into a church is to take place. Opposition to the name Mennonite does exist, but it has been successfully overcome in various districts. Much of the success in this work is dependent upon the worker. In the opening of new fields we have generally responded to the call of a number of people of Mennonite background. It was pointed out that we should perhaps also move into new housing areas with the help of an evangelistic team and

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[10] GCY, 1945, p. 27.

> then start a new work. Old established areas are often hard fields since many have established their church loyalties.[11]

This quotation is merely a sample of the kind of work the Committee of Home Missions had done during its last triennium of existence. In my judgment it is the best report on record; unfortunately, it was also the final one. The dissolution of this Committee was another step of the Conference--though perhaps unconscious--to distance itself from the responsibility of world mission and to make distant foreign missions its sole, all-consuming concern, as I have already shown in the previous chapter.

Heidenmission and Indianermission

The term Heidenmission or Gentile mission appears for the first time in the 1881 Convention records, then again in 1883. Thereafter it occurs as an integral part of the mission rhetoric.

Refocusing the Vision

The concept of the "dual mandate" referred to earlier did not develop without serious tensions, both philosophically and structurally. Initially, the Brethren clearly identified Heidenmission with äußere Mission, taking geographical distance as the only criterion of distinction between the two. Heidenmission meant mission in a foreign country, especially India where the American German Baptists together with the Mennonite Brethren of Russia were engaged in that kind of mission.[12] But historical reality soon interfered with such neat and simple division.

The 1885 record has it that G. N. Thompson (Thompsen, Thomson, Thomsen), a Baptist missionary in India, had written to the Mennonite Brethren in America about his work.[13]

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[11] GCY, 1960, pp. 100-101.

[12] "Minutes," pp. 54-57, 67; GCY, 1883, p. 7.

[13] GCY, 1884, p. 13; cf. John H. Lohrenz, The Mennonite Brethren Church (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Foreign Missions, 1950), p. 75.

Thompson invited them to have an active part in foreign mission by continuing financial support for Telugu preachers, as they had done since 1881. To make the appeal more personal, he submitted two names, Bidijudy Abraham and Darla Tiramalonah. Karl Gloeckler, a German Baptist Mission executive, urged the Brethren to respond favorably to Thompson's request. The Brethren were impressed by Gloeckler's presence and unanimously consented to designate $100.00 annually for each of the two men in India.[14] But the vision of the Brethren soon expanded beyond India, and the concept of Heidenmission accordingly grew to embrace Africa and other areas of critical missionary need.[15]

At the Convention in 1888, the delegates with a missionary vision pressured the Conference to acquire its own foreign mission field. Why should they continue sending money and men to the Baptists? What they wanted was to recruit workers from their own midst and commission them to other lands, independent of the Baptists.[16] Some church members spent much time in prayer, asking the Lord to bring to pass their hearts' desires. "The Lord graciously answered prayers," says one writer, "and granted to the M.B. Church devoted workers and fields and willing givers and opened doors for such work."[17]

The process by which the Mennonite Brethren intentionally began engaging in Heidenmission is noteworthy. The 1889 Convention delegates appointed three men and charged them to search aggressively for a mission field.[18] At the same time,

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[14] GCY, 1885, p. 11; 1887, p. 11; cf. 1891, p. 24.

[15] GCY, 1887, p. 11; 1888, p. 3; 1891, p. 25; 1892, p. 21; 1893, p. 15.

[16] GCY, 1888, pp. 9-10.

[17] Lohrenz, Mennonite Brethren Church, p. 87.

[18] GCY, 1889, n.p. The search team consisted of Abraham Schellenberg, Cornelius Wedel, and J. F. Harms. Cf. A. E. Janzen, Foreign Missions (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Foreign Missions, Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America, 1948), pp. 3-4.

the Conference supported John Baerg, one of its promising young men, during his studies at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Rochester. It was widely assumed that Baerg would become the first American MB missionary as soon as a mission field could be found. Baerg himself helped in that search.[19]

But God had other plans. Due to serious illness, Baerg could not be commissioned and asked the Conference to release him from all responsibilities and obligations. On the one hand, this was a disappointing and painful experience for both the Conference and Baerg; on the other hand, it was also a challenge to take a new step of faith. Right there and then the Brethren resolved "not to bury their talents" but instead act constructively by designating $500 toward "mission to the heathen."[20]

Despite such positive action, the Baerg case seems to have been a severe blow to the Conference in that the search for a mission field was interrupted for nearly two years. When the brethren resumed their active search in 1891, they suddenly became aware of the American Indians. This discovery added a new dimension to their thinking, leading them to undertake preliminary field research among the tribes of Arizona and New Mexico.[21] Their level of seriousness about this work is seen in the fact that they invited missionary Heinrich R. Voth of the Kirchengemeinde to their 1892 Convention. They wanted a firsthand report of Voth's experiences as missionary among the Hopi Indians in Arizona. Among other things, Voth called their attention to the need of evangelizing the Comanches in Oklahoma.[22] This sounded like an intriguing proposal. The Conference responded by appointing an ad hoc committee of nine members and charged it with establishing work among the Indians.[23]

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[19] GCY, 1891, pp. 25-26; 1892, pp. 23-24.

[20] GCY, 1891, pp. 24-25; 1893, p. 16.

[21] GCY, 1891, pp. 25-26.

[22] Janzen, Foreign Missions, p. 4.

[23] GCY, 1892, pp. 22-23.

At the next Convention in 1893, Elder Schellenberg preached a sermon entitled, "Mission Work Among the Comanche Indians." Again the delegates responded with enthusiasm, designated $150 for Indianermission, and passed a resolution to delegate one of their young men to visit the General Conference Mennonite mission near Fairview, Oklahoma, where Missionary Rodolphe Petter was active among the Cheyenne at the time.[24]

Meanwhile, a number of young church families homesteaded on the frontiers of Oklahoma near the native Comanche people. The Conference saw in all of this the leading of the sovereign Lord and decided to move forward with aggressive action. God also prepared Heinrich and Elizabeth Kohfeld as missionaries for this new venture. Although the Kohfelds were not present at the Convention, the decision was made to commission them to serve, minister to, work among the Comanche Indians.[25] The Kohfelds investigated conditions and discovered that the government was willing to make a special land grant of 160 acres for this purpose. The Conference accepted the gift and, in the spirit of the time, built a mission station at Post Oak of Indiahoma, Oklahoma.[26]

Thus the Mennonite Brethren had refocused their vision from Heidenmission far away to Indianermission close by, even if that was not their first choice. India and Africa retained priority on the agenda. For the time being, however, this was the way to go. Thus in addition to the geographical frontier, the cultural frontier became a reality for the Brethren. This shift necessitated structural changes as well, and in 1895 resulted in a four-member Missionskomitee für Indianermission with one member serving on the Komitee für äußere Mission.[27]

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[24] James C. Juhnke, A People in Mission: A history of General Conference Mennonite Overseas Missions (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1979), pp. 16-18; Janzen, Foreign Missions, p. 4.

[25] GCY, 1894, p. 12.

[26] GCY, 1895, p. 10.

[27] GCY, 1895, p. 10; 1896, pp. 12-13, 18-19.

The mission among the Indians was carried on as a General Conference project under the Committee for Foreign Mission and its successor, the Board of Foreign Missions. At the Convention in Yarrow, this Board recommended to incorporate the "Post Oak Mission, Indiahoma, Oklahoma, with all its institutions and assets into the southern district as a regular Mennonite Brethren Church."[28] That officially ended crosscultural mission involvement of the General Conference on the American Continent.

Less Than Cordial Relations

Early developments in mission brought the Mennonite Brethren and the German Baptists in ever closer proximity. Baptist missionaries from Africa and India visited the Brethren in their homes, reported in their churches, spoke at their conventions, and circulated the mission periodical Sendbote among MB church members. In turn, the Mennonite Brethren increased their monetary and moral support for Baptist mission, sent their potential missionary candidates to Baptist schools, and, ironically, supplied the Baptists with missionaries both from Russia and America.

It is also interesting to note that the American Brethren sent their students to the Baptist Theological Seminary in Rochester, New York, while the Brethren in Russia sent theirs to the Baptist Seminary in Hamburg, Germany. Yet the MB missionaries from Russia served in India under the American Baptist Mission Union of Boston, while the first American MB missionaries served in Africa under the Berlin Baptist Mission Society.[29]

The more involved the Brethren became with the Baptists of Berlin, the longer they were unable to implement their vision for independent foreign mission work. As a result, there developed, as it were, a prolonged but less than cordial relationship between the two groups. It was a relationship

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[28] GCY, 1957, pp. 40-41.

[29] GCY, 1883, p. 7; 1884, p. 13; 1885, p. 11; 1887, p. 11; 1888, p. 3; Janzen, "Missionary Dynamic," pp. 157-158.

that was undeclared in terms of intention, undefined in terms of responsibility, and uncertain in terms of missional direction; yet it became increasingly more binding, and that despite serious tensions.

A recent collection of older writings by Eduard Schewe, director of the Berlin Baptist Mission Society, sheds new light on that period. In 1895, Schewe visited the American Mennonite Brethren in the interest of his mission. Of all Mennonites, noted Schewe, he found the Mennonite Brethren closest to the Baptists in theology, ecclesiology, and spirit. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" was the watchword, according to Schewe, which the Baptists had in common with the Brethren. His experience among them was positive and their interest in mission overwhelming. He wrote:

> [The Mennonite Brethren] are a valiant people, piously holy (gottgeheiligt) and zealous for mission, particularly mission to the gentiles. The large and wonderful mission gatherings in special mission tents set up in open fields were like a bubbling fountain of blessing which I shall remember as long as I live. Just imagine the endless fields of corn as far as the eye can see, having no more than three homes in view and the huge, white tent standing in their midst. Horsedrawn carriages loaded with people were rolling in from all directions. Within a short time the tent was surrounded by a literal barricade of 100 to 180 wagons drawn by some 300 of the finest horses.
>
> More than a 1000 people attended the meetings which began at 9 o'clock in the morning and lasted until 10 o'clock in the evening. Between the three major gatherings people met in smaller groups for singing and for prayer to praise God. Both noon and evening they served a simple meal. . . . The moving of the Spirit was evident throughout these meetings. While the programs were edifying in nature, the primary theme always focused on "The Mission in Cameroon."
>
> We spent five weeks with the Mennonite Brethren and I am grateful to the Lord for allowing me to become personally acquainted with these our zealous partners in mission. Our missionaries Wedel and Enns are from this fellowship.[30]

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[30] Eduard Schewe, Dem Herrn Vertrauen: Blüten und Früchte eines Lebens für Gemeinde, Mission und Diakonie, Hg. Günter Bolders (Wuppertal und Kassel: Oncken, 1979), pp. 178-179.

In the context of the Mennonite Brethren/Baptist relationship, it seems that Schewe's enthusiasm for the Brethren was not entirely free from pragmatic and utilitarian motives. As soon as MB missionaries had been successfully recruited and were firmly committed to serve under the Berlin Baptist Mission, he no longer spoke of "one faith" which he had seen earlier as a binding force between his denomination and the Mennonite Brethren. But such human traits were surely also prevalent among the Brethren, whom Scheve initially described as "gottgeheiligt."

Separation from the Baptists

Whatever theological motives there may have been for the establishment of an independent Mennonite Brethren mission field among the "pagan peoples," the extensive and intensive debate at the 1896 Convention in Ebenfeld, Kansas, suggested several other than theological and biblical reasons for independency.

First, there was an overwhelming desire on the part of the Mennonite Brethren to retain and employ their own missionaries. While in the 1870s and 1880s they had had no missionaries of their own, during the 1890s there were several couples and single persons ready to be sent out at any cost. But the Brethren faced a serious problem: they had no place to which to send their candidates. Therefore it became necessary for the missionaries to look for other agencies. Since the German Baptists had a field in Africa, and since they continued to appeal for missionaries, and since Heinrich Enns and Peter Wedel had studied at the Baptist Seminary in Rochester, it seemed only natural in the 1890s to turn to the Baptists, just as their Russian counterparts had done in the 1880s. Thus Wedel and Enns together with their wives prepared themselves to serve in Cameroon under the Berlin Baptist Mission Society. Leading delegates pleaded at the 1896 Convention that the Wedels and the Ennses might change their minds and commit themselves fully to the Mennonite Brethren Conference for foreign mission work. The

Conference even pledged its financial support to the couples. But the Baptists prevailed in sending them out.[31]

Second, there was an implicit fear of being absorbed by the Baptists. In the process of negotiations between the Baptists and MB missionaries, the Brethren recalled their early associations with Oncken and Liebig in Russia. That relationship had been cordial and the Baptists had respected the Mennonite Brethren doctrinal distinctives, including the issues of the oath and nonresistance. But that was not the case now. In fact, a certain Mr. Hergert of the Baptist Mission raised the fundamental questions whether the German government as a colonial power of Cameroon would honor the peace position expressed in the Mennonite Brethren confession of faith. Eduard Scheve, who had previously aligned himself in "one faith" with the Brethren, now expressly wrote in a letter that he could not recognize them as Mennonites, but would consider them as Baptists.[32] That letter was the straw which broke the camel's back: the Mennonite Brethren withdrew their support and resolved to become an independent church in mission.

Third, there was the perpetual drain on their mission treasury without the existence of an MB mission field. The Brethren lamented: "Unsere Konferenz hat Tausende Dollars an andere Benennungen geschickt."[33] Therefore, they agreed to support the Ennses and the Wedels with funds from their own treasury, hoping that they would become MB missionaries in Africa. But if they should still find it inappropriate to make the change from Baptist to Mennonite Brethren mission, then the Brethren would have to look for other personnel for foreign mission work. Whatever happened, one thing was clear: the Baptists should no longer be permitted to exploit the good will, the financial treasury, and the human resources of the Brethren.[34]

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[31] GCY, 1896, pp. 13-18.

[32] GCY, 1896, pp. 14 and 16.

[33] GCY, 1896, p. 16.

[34] GCY, 1896, p. 17.

Finally, the counsel of the Russian MB missionary Abraham Friesen of India had a decisive impact on the decisions of the Brethren in America. At the 1896 Convention, moderator J. F. Harms read a letter from Friesen, saying:

> If either all or the majority of the brothers and sisters in America are of the opinion to build up their work at home on their own, they should do likewise with regard to gentile mission. There is enough work among the many thousands here in India.

Friesen went on to note that there were many unoccupied fields where no one was yet working and that he was prepared to assist the American Brethren in finding a suitable area for their own work.[35]

Becoming Independent in Foreign Mission

The chairman of the Committee for Foreign Mission reported at the Convention in 1898 that all preparations for establishing a Mennonite Brethren mission station in India were complete. Thereupon the Committee recommended to the Conference that the Nikolai N. Hieberts of Mountain Lake, Minnesota, should be the first American MB missionaries to India. This historical moment turned into a moving scene when Hiebert rose to his feet and read the same text which Jesus read at his "inauguration" in Nazareth, saying,

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me
> Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.
> He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
> And recovery of sight to the blind,
> To set free those who are downtrodden. (Lk. 4:18, NASB)[36]

After a brief homily on the pericope, Hiebert gave a moving account of God's call and of the overwhelming affirmation he had experienced in all the congregations which he had visited on behalf of mission. The Conference participants listened attentively and unanimously endorsed the Committee's recommendation. "One could read it in the faces of the delegates that the entire convention was deeply moved," wrote one reporter.

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[35] GCY, 1896, p. 16.

[36] GCY, 1898, p. 18.

"With much weeping numerous brethren expressed this our undertaking publicly to the Lord in prayer."[37]

Thus by 1900, the Mennonite Brethren had intentionally entered both Heidenmission in Africa and India and Indianermission in America under the rubric of äußere Mission, or foreign mission, at three levels. First, there was the national level. Heinrich Kohfeld had been accepted as missionary to the Comanche Indians at Post Oak in Indiahoma, Oklahoma in 1894. He began work by himself, but upon marriage established a household there. A year later he was assisted by A. J. Becker. After marriage, the Beckers also joined the Indianermission full time in 1901. In the meantime, the Conference had sent Maria Regier (1896) and Katie Penner, both deaconnesses, to assist the Kohfelds as missionaries at Post Oak.[38]

Second, there was the resource level. The Wedels and the Ennses had gone to serve in Cameroon in 1895 and 1896 respectively. Although they received funds from the Conference and were members of the Mennonite Brethren Church,[39] they had gone out under the Berlin Baptist Mission Society. Finally, there was the authentic "foreign mission" level. The N. N. Hieberts and Elizabeth S. Neufeld were commissioned by the Mennonite Brethren to serve as their own missionaries in South India, in proximity to the work established among the Telugu at Nalgonda in 1889 by the Abraham Friesens and others from Russia.

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[37] GCY, 1898, p. 19.

[38] GCY, 1894, p. 12; 1895, p. 10; 1896, pp. 12-13; 1901, p. 7. Cf. A. E. Janzen, Foreign Missions, pp. 4-12.

[39] Mrs. Wedel was daughter Martha of Rev. and Mrs. August Liebig, a Baptist pastor of Bridgewater, South Dakota. Liebig had worked some years among the Mennonite Brethren in Russia. See chapter 5 above. Cf. G. W. Peters, The Growth of Foreign Missions in the Mennonite Brethren Church (Hillsboro, KS: The Board of Foreign Missions, 1947), p. 81, Note #45. See also Eduard Schewe's fascinating description of the Wedels' wedding as a "Missionshochzeit . . . wo in Gegenwart von zirka tausend Hochzeitsgästen . . . zehn Boten des Herrn ein zeugnis vom Herrn ablegten." Die Mission der deutschen Baptisten in Kamerun (Berlin: Missionsgesellschaft der deutschen Baptisten, 1901), p. 48.

The struggle of these early ventures was intense and the cost high. We read that Kohfeld working among the Comanches "was left more or less alone in the wilderness." Like the patriarch Jacob at Peniel (Gen. 32:22-30), so Kohfeld wrestled with spiritual forces at Post Oak. He spent much time "waiting on the Lord in prayer."[40] The struggle was so intense that he was tempted to "give up and go home," saying, "It can't be done." But again like Jacob, Kohfeld heard a voice say to him, "your Saviour is ready to take your load of sorrow, and he will care for His own honor, if you will give it all over to Him."[41] Kohfeld did and prevailed.

The struggle of the Ennses and Wedels in Cameroon was surely not less intense than that of Kohfeld at Post Oak. The outcome was profoundly shocking to the entire Conference. All four missionaries became victims of malaria and other diseases. Broken in health, Mrs. Wedel was compelled to return home after only a few months in Africa.[42] On July 5, 1897 the Berlin Mission received a telegram, "Enns tot, sofort Ersatz."[43] Because of illness, Peter Wedel left for Germany on July 22, but never reached Berlin. On August 20, 1897, another telegram said, "Wedel tot." He had died on the ship, and his body was buried at sea.[44] A third message reached the Mission on January 3, 1898, saying, "Sch[wester] Enns tot."[45]

This sacrificial experience in Cameroon contributed to the fact that the Mennonite Brethren as a Conference refocused their vision from Africa to India. But even there the first missionary couple was overcome by fatigue and frailty and in broken health obliged to leave that field

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[40] Janzen, Foreign Missions, p. 6.

[41] Janzen, Foreign Missions, p. 7.

[42] Peters, Growth, pp. 81-82; Schewe, Die Mission, pp. 49-67.

[43] Schewe, Die Mission, p. 61.

[44] Schewe, Die Mission, pp. 64, 66.

[45] Schewe, Die Mission, p. 66.

within two years. The Hieberts returned to America in 1901.[46]

The atmosphere of the 1901 Convention in Bingham Lake, Minnesota, was one of disappointment, but not of discouragement. Two missionary couples volunteered to take the place of the N. N. Hieberts.[121] And foreign mission work continued, gradually extending its witness to twenty-seven countries in 100 years. I will say more about that in Chapter 13.

Stadtmission and Judenmission

At the fifth Mennonite Brethren Convention in Hamilton County, Nebraska, in 1883, the delegates discussed dangers and difficulties faced by church members living in the "sinful city." They finally concluded that they could not prohibit their people from moving to the city if they chose to do so. But the report makes it explicit that all would-be MB city dwellers must be "warned of the grave dangers" facing them. Such business transactions as "buying and selling must be permitted, but not without warning that the desire to become rich frequently leads to great loss and shame."[47] Twenty-five years later the MB fear of the city had turned into a burden for the city.

Mission Focus on the Cities

Since the return of the N. N. Hieberts from India, Hiebert had been serving as itinerant missionary for the Conference.[48] He was a man with a global vision, including the needs in America. In his travels, Hiebert had become burdened with a vision for opportunities and needs in the cities, where numerous Mennonite Brethren families were already engaged in different professions, occupations, and ministries.

In 1907, Hiebert presented a passionate plea to the Conference delegates, asking them to accept the Stadtmission as an integral part of their mission. They resolved to

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[46] Peters, Growth, p. 85.

[47] GCY, 1883, p. 15.

[48] Gcy, 1901, pp. 5-9.

nominate a three-member City Mission Committee, charging it with a threefold task: (a) to solicit contributions for such work; (b) to recruit workers for active city mission service; and (c) to look for a suitable location to implement the mission. This resolution must be seen as the historical foundation for fifty years of General Conference city mission work in America.[49]

Since a number of individuals were already working evangelistically in various cities,[50] the new Committee sought to determine the extent of such involvement. The following year (1908), the chairman reported to the Convention that city mission work was being done in Hurley, Wisconsin, and in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and that the target audience consisted mainly of nominal Christians, Jews, and transients, mostly recent immigrants who did not know the English language.[51]

At the 1909 Convention in Henderson, Nebraska, it was decided to discontinue the work in Hurley and shift all its resources to Minneapolis. The Conference also decided to engage Abraham and Martha Schmidt (Smith) as full-time missionaries, contingent on available funds. In accordance with a resolution of 1907 and 1908, the local churches were urged to make a special thanksgiving offering and to take one additional collection a year for the support of city mission.[52]

Minneapolis was at this time a city with 300,000 inhabitants, of whom about 75,000 had some church connection. After a special research and survey venture, the Committee for City Mission characterized the city as a "microcosm, if not macrocosm," for mission opportunities. No one really had the faintest idea, noted N. N. Hiebert, what golden opportunities there might be "to search for human souls hiding behind fences of the most neglected city sections." This being the case,

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[49] GCY, 1907, pp. 45-46.

[50] GCY, 1907, pp. 45-46.

[51] GCY, 1908, pp. 27-30.

[52] GCY, 1909, pp. 40-41.

Hiebert listed several guiding principles that should be helpful in determining the most suitable location to establish a mission: (a) the cost of housing; (b) absence of a Christian witness in the area; (c) language of the inhabitants; (d) an indication of willingness on the part of the people to attend meetings if and when a work should be started; and (e) an inward sense that the Lord was really directing the Committee toward a given area.

The decision was finally reached to settle for a heavy industrial section where "very, very many large families are living who apparently do not belong to the lowest social class but where little Christian work is being done." Hiebert continued:

> It is the committee's perception that our churches would want us to reach these families, especially the children, and specifically those poor and neglected people who have not yet experienced the warmth of the love of Jesus through the ministry of others. Yet no work in the Kingdom of God--if it is to endure--has ever been started without tears and dedication. Thus we covet for our workers such commitment and dedication to God in order to establish the work with the blessing of our Lord.[53]

Meanwhile, the Canadian Mennonite Brethren had also become burdened with the unevangelized masses in the city. Therefore, Johann Warkentin, a delegate from Canada made a strong plea at the 1909 Convention in Henderson, Nebraska, on behalf of his Northern District Conference, requesting the General Conference to begin city mission work in Winnipeg. He presented the following arguments in support of this request: (a) Winnipeg is the "New York" of the North; (b) it is the strategic gateway to the West; (c) it serves as a popular landing base for scores of German immigrants; (d) it has no city mission among German-speaking people; and (e) there is a nucleus of Mennonite Brethren believers who would serve as a support group for city missionaries and their work.[54]

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[53] N. N. Hiebert, "Wie steht es mit unserer Stadtmission?" Zionsbote, April 29, 1910, p. 2.

[54] GCY, 1909, p. 43.

The response to this Canadian request was total silence on the part of the United States delegates at the Convention. Three years later, N. N. Hiebert explained at the conference in Hillsboro (1912) that the leadership saw its primary task in Heidenmission, not in Stadtmission. Should, however, sufficient funds be collected, then the Conference might consider assisting the Northern District to begin a work in Winnipeg. For the immediate future, however, no expansion of Conference ministry would be possible.[55]

In 1921, the Canadian representatives again raised the question whether the city mission in Winnipeg could come under Conference sponsorship and jurisdiction on the same principles as the South Side Mission in Minneapolis. After prolonged discussions, consensus was reached that Winnipeg should remain a mission project of the Northern District. Furthermore, it was agreed that the congregations in the United States would take two annual collections for the Conference mission in Minneapolis and one for Winnipeg, and that the Canadian churches would support their own mission work and take one collection specifically for Minneapolis.[56] The burden was heaviest for the Canadian churches.

Tensions Among Brethren

Perhaps this is the time to interject a critical comment concerning relationships. One senses a nagging tension that had developed between the Brethren of Central United States and their younger siblings living north of the forty-ninth parallel of the American continent, a tension that lasted for more than thirty years. While the South Side Mission in Minneapolis and the City Mission in Winnipeg were not the cause of the tension, they did give occasion for it to surface.

Several questions emerging from the records merit reflection even if no clear answer can be given. Why did the delegates at the 1907 Convention accept the Minneapolis mission

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[55] GCY, 1912, pp. 15-16.

[56] GCY, 1921, pp. 34-35.

as a Conference project but rejected the proposal made by the Canadian delegates in 1909 to do the same with the Winnipeg mission? Had not N. N. Hiebert as itinerant Conference missionary convinced the entire brotherhood of his heavy burden and great vision for the city and of the urgent need to make Stadtmission a General Conference concern? Why then do the records from 1909 onward clearly reflect that the General Conference, with a majority of membership in the United States, was as much in favor of keeping the South Side Mission under its control as it was unwilling to accept the Winnipeg mission as a Conference project?[57] While it is not possible to offer a specific response to these questions, the subsequent developments may provide a partial explanation.

In the course of time, various Mennonite Brethren congregations began city mission work in Bakersfield, California, and in Portland, Oregon on the West Coast. The work in Winnipeg also expanded. When word about these efforts came before the 1915 triennial Convention in Winkler, Manitoba, the reports turned into prolonged discussions. A resolution committee finally helped the Conference resolve the conflict by expressing "a most sympathetic position towards the city mission efforts of the Northern Conference in Winnipeg, and the Pacific Conference in Bakersfield." The resolution goes on to say that the Conference also "wishes them God's blessings in the endeavor, and does not wish in any way to hinder the support of these causes."[58]

Although the city mission in Winnipeg had received partial support from the churches in the United States since 1921, it was never officially accepted by the General Conference until it shifted its focus to mission among the Jews.[59] The reasons were not spelled out beyond an explicit word of caution that the Conference must concentrate its full support on

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[57] GCY, 1924, p. 42; 1927, p. 63; 1933, p. 31.

[58] Janzen and Giesbrecht, We Recommend, p. 151; cf. GCY, 1915, pp. 22-23.

[59] GCY, 1921, pp. 34-35; GCY, 1948, pp. 46-50.

Minneapolis, lest its efforts become too widely scattered.[60] But again, there is the inevitable question, could the real reason have been ecclesio-political, rather than administrative, financial, or spiritual? As the Conference expanded, the Brethren in the Central United States of Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota seem to have been on the defensive to guard their leadership positions. Initiatives by leaders in other areas seem to have been perceived as a threat to the authority and security of the pioneering fathers.

Two interesting recommendations came to the Convention floor in Hillsboro, Kansas in 1933: (a) The Chairman of the Committee for City Mission recommended that the South Side Mission in Minneapolis be considered a foreign mission project, so that it could legitimately be administrated by the Committee for Foreign Mission, and (b) the Chairman of the Pacific District Conference recommended that all aspects of city mission work become the concern of the respective District Conference where such mission was carried on, and that the Home Mission Committee or a newly elected committee assume responsibility to coordinate the various city projects. The Conference seems to have been stunned equally by both recommendations. Their radical nature did not even solicit discussion, only another recommendation, namely to table the motion until the next Convention in 1936.[61]

But even then the issue was not taken up, except that the sentiment was expressed that the mission church in Minneapolis should be organized as an independent congregation.[62] That was much easier said than done. In 1943 the resolution was passed that the churches of the Conference support the city mission both financially and with their prayers as heretofore, and that retiring missionaries Abraham

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[60] GCY, 1915, p. 22.

[61] GCY, 1933, p. 31.

[62] GCY, 1936, pp. 31-33.

and Martha Schmidt be replaced by a younger couple, the Melvin Schimnowskis.[63] Thus work went on and tensions continued.

Gentiles for the Jews

Fifteen years after those radical proposals of 1933 had come to the Convention floor, the delegates of the 1948 sessions were equally surprised by similar motions with regard to the city mission projects. The record of the ensuing discussions reflects some of the vocal interaction between the delegates about the motions. The final outcome, however, was so significant that it changed both status of the city mission projects and the relationship of the conference to the same.

One motion was to turn the South Side Mission of Minneapolis over to the respective district conference. The motion carried.[64] The process for the transfer was immediately initiated. After nine years of intense negotiations, the Mission was finally given over to the Central District Conference. What had begun as a General Conference mission project in 1907 had now in 1957 become a District Conference project. Eventually, the Mission has developed into what is today the New Hope Mennonite Brethren church of Minneapolis, expanded to a mere 100 members in nearly eighty years.[65]

The other proposal had to do with a special kind of mission work that somehow found resonance with the Mennonite Brethren, namely the work among the Jews of Winnipeg. Missionary Jacob Pankratz presented a powerful report to the 1948 Convention delegates, focusing on the cross of Christ as a stumbling block for Jewish people (1 Cor. 1:22). He articulated with conviction and compassion the message that God in his omniscience had deemed it wise to make "the message of the cross, yea, the very person of the Crucified,

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[63] GCY, English Edition, 1943, pp. 77-79; German Edition, pp. 69-72.

[64] GCY, 1948, p. 52.

[65] GCY, 1957, p. 105; 1985/86 Planner Directory (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1985), p. 38.

to be the only means of salvation of both Jews and Gentiles." Even if the cross was a stumbling block to most, and even if "only a very small remnant of this people have throughout history brought forth fruits of true repentance," argued Pankratz, the cross of Christ must remain central.

> The message of the Crucified is still the acid test of all Jewish mission work. As soon as the crucified Christ is left out of the message to Israel a countless number of methods are applied and the work becomes a spiritless, lifeless undertaking. And herein we perceive the failures of many a well begun work among Israel and earnestly pray God to give us perception to avoid the snares and pitfalls of the evil one in this new work of the General Conference.[66]

When the speaker sat down, it was obvious that he had captured minds and hearts of the delegates, who were ready to give their support to any forthcoming proposal concerning Pankratz's ministry among the Jews.

"We recommend," read the motion, "that the Jewish work in Winnipeg, known as the 'Gospel Witness to Israel,' be accepted as a General Conference City Mission work." Not only was this recommendation passed, the Conference also resolved "that Brother and Sister J. J. Pankratz continue to serve us as our laborers in Winnipeg, Manitoba, serving in the 'Gospel to Israel' Mission."[67]

At the 1951 Convention the delegates endorsed the Gospel Witness to Israel in Winnipeg and asked the Pankratzes to continue as "Conference missionaries to the Jewish people."[68] Not long thereafter, however, the Pankratzes relocated to work among the Jews in Toronto, Ontario, and the George Konrads took their place in Winnipeg for a relatively short time. As a result, the City Mission Board recommended in 1954 that the work continue and that the Canadian Conference assume responsibility for the same.[69] Although the motion

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[66] GCY, 1948, p. 47; cf. Canadian Conference Yearbook (GCY), 1948, pp. 34-37.

[67] GCY, 1948, p. 52; GCY, 1949, pp. 24-27.

[68] GCY, 1951, p. 110.

[69] GCY, 1954, pp. 134, 136-137; GCY, 1953, pp. 32-34.

carried, the outcome was less than satisfactory. In fact, the whole story reads like a fragmented novel with scenes full of expectations interspersed in the plot but lacking cohesion, continuity, and above all, the denouement. "Since the Konrads have been called into another field of labor," so reads the last report, "we have not been able to procure workers for this field . . . [and] deemed it wise to wait in the procuring of workers until the General Conference [sessions]."[70] The Convention came and went, but the work never flourished again and has left no visible fruit.

Kindermission and Randmission

As early as 1883, Conference leaders expressed concern for children. "The work of mission," they said, "must begin with children." Therefore, it was pointed out, "all parents with children ought to send their little ones to Sunday school where they can learn reading, gain their souls' salvation, and increase their knowledge of the Word of God."[71] Several years later the Sunday school question was again raised at the General Conference level, shifting the responsibility of implementation to the Sunday School Convention of Kansas.[72]

Underlying Philosophy

The Brethren strongly believed in the philosophy that reaching a child with the gospel was not only saving a soul for heaven, but also a life for service on earth. At the 1888 Convention, the Conference went on record as encouraging participants and workers of Sunday schools and youth groups to become actively involved in evangelistic outreach through the distribution of quality Christian tracts and other literature.[73]

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[70] GCY, 1954, p. 134.

[71] GCY, 1883, pp. 13-14.

[72] Cf. GCY, 1888, p. 13, and "Verhandlungen der elften Bundeskonferenz in Minnesota, 1889, recorded in the Zionsbote, October 1889, special insert, ü8.

[73] GCY, 1888, p. 14.

There is no evidence of immediate implementation of this particular method of mission by the Conference, except in city mission efforts. Yet the idea surfaced again some decades later, when it turned into a vision of great consequence for Mennonite Brethren world mission. Hosts of young people, as well as older men and women, became burdened in a new way "for undying souls for whom Christ died," as Peter P. Neufeld put it. Neufeld descriptively delineated the philosophy undergirding the burden for souls in these words:

> At no time in our generation have we been so conscious of the fact that we are living near the end of the present dispensation of grace. The Church founded by Jesus Christ must therefore reconsider its responsibility to fulfill the commission given by its Lord in the words recorded by the Evangelist Matthew: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."
>
> The Lord of the harvest is still looking for workers who will gladly enter into the whitened harvest fields, where many disillusioned people sigh for deliverance from the bondage of sin and long for rest and peace. Unless someone has compassion on these "lost sheep" they will be eternally lost. And we are not measuring up to our responsibility unless we go into the highways and byways and compel them to come in.[74]

Those words quiver with a sense of urgency and immediacy for missionary involvement. They also remind the Mennonite Brethren that the risen Lord has given marching orders, and that they as a Church have the responsibility of carrying out the Great Commission. There is a "whitened harvest field"; there are "lost sheep" outside the fold on "highways and byways"; there is a call for workers who will gladly, but with compassion, "compel them to come in." Both the Kinder-mission and the Randmission were born in this kind of spiritual atmosphere. Although neither of these two projects was sponsored directly by the General Conferences, the ideas

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[74] Quoted by Peter Penner, Reaching the Otherwise Unreached: An Historical Account of the West Coast Children's Mission of B.C. (Clearbrook: West Coast Children's Mission of British Columbia, 1959), p. 5.

and the language clearly resonate American Mennonite Brethren mission thinking of the time.

Western Children's Mission

In the 1930s there emerged a strong Mennonite Brethren mission involvement in the western provinces of Canada. The "Western Children's Mission" (WCM) of Saskatchewan came into being in 1935, and the "West Coast Children's Mission" of British Columbia was founded in 1939.

The Mission in Saskatchewan was the result of a missionary vision generated by MB teachers and students of the Bethany Bible Institute, a school deeply committed to preparing missionaries and other church workers.[75] The Mission was a child of a "memorable Monday night meeting" of the Bethany Prayer Band, writes Margaret Epp. "After a heart-searching address," school principal J. B. Toews "put a direct question to member after member: 'Are you satisfied to hoard the gospel?'" Toews asked. Each one responded individually, "No. . . . No. . . . No. . . ." This was the hour when the WCM was born.[76]

The Western Children's Mission was officially incorporated under the dynamic leadership of G. W. Peters. In keeping with the "ecumenical" spirit of the Bethany Bible Institute where he was teaching at the time, Peters drafted a charter, characterizing the Mission as "interdenominational, international, evangelical and evangelistic."[77] It was "international" because of "anti-German and anti-Mennonite feelings aroused during the War," and it was designated as "interdenominational" because of the "faith principle" perceived to be ideal

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[75] Margaret Epp, Proclaim Jubilee! A History of Bethany Bible Institute (1927-1977) ([Hepburn, Saskatchewan: Bethany Bible Institute, 1976]), pp. 27-28, 49-53.

[76] Epp, Proclaim Jubilee!, p. 50; cf. p. 45.

[77] Penner, Reaching the Otherwise Unreached, p. 12; cf. Epp, Proclaim Jubilee!, p. 25.

for work among children from various religious and ethnic backgrounds.[78]

The major focus of the Western Children's Mission was from the very beginning on reaching children for Christ through Sunday Schools held throughout the year and Vacation Bible Schools conducted during the summer months. Large numbers of young people volunteered to serve in these schools free of charge. During its early years the WCM enlisted over 75 percent of Bethany students who spent from two to six weeks teaching Vacation Bible School each summer.[79] Epp writes:

> In most cases the workers moved from (comparatively) well-to-do settings to poverty-stricken areas. There were gradations of poverty even in those difficult times. That the difference often was unnecessary . . . did not alter the facts. Here were needy folk, as poor in spirit as they were in material goods. And the W. Ch. M. workers learned to be poor with them. They had to. Their marginal living allowance saw to that. And D. B. Wiens [well-known MB pastor and radio missionary broadcasting to the Soviet Union], for one, counts this to have been an added blessing. It afforded a rugged training in self-denial for the worker, and it broke down barriers between him and the community. It was in the pattern of Christ Himself, who became poor that we through His poverty might become rich.[80]

A generation of young leaders was just now emerging on the Canadian side of the Conference. These were predominantly, though not exclusively, the sons and daughters of immigrant families who had come from Russia to Canada in the 1920s. This was a unique generation of men and women with multilingual and crosscultural skills; they demonstrated academic aggressiveness, theological assertiveness and ecclesiastical innovativeness. At the same time they were people with a deep commitment to Christ, a vision for the world, and a faith in the Word of God to match these qualities. They were a gift of God to the Mennonite Brethren Conference

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[78] Penner, Reaching the Otherwise Unreached, pp. 12-13.

[79] Cf. Epp, Proclaim Jubilee, pp. 50-51.

[80] Epp, Proclaim Jubilee, p. 51.

at a time when new doors for world mission were opening up everywhere, including äußere Mission, Kindermission, and Randmission.

As already noted, the General Conference never became directly involved in Kindermission, but the philosophy of reaching children with the gospel found a great deal of sympathy among mission leaders. At the May 1943 sessions, for instance, the members of the Board of Foreign Missions listened with evident interest to a report by G. W. Peters on how the Western Children's Mission "has been blessed and expanded." The report continues:

> Several mission stations have been established with over 30 full time workers and several part-time workers. It has grown to such an extent that the financial support fot [sic] this mission on part of the Rosthern District is getting too heavy.[81]

There is ample evidence that a cordial relationship developed between the Board of Foreign Missions and the Western Children's Mission, a relationship which proved mutually beneficial.

On the one hand, the vigorous and aggressive leadership of this new Mission must have appealed to the Board. On the other hand, the financial stability with which the Board of Foreign Missions was operating must have had some attraction for the Western Children's Mission, which depended on voluntary labor for most of its work and operated on a depressed budget. There is evidence for both.

At the 1943 Convention in Buhler, Kansas, the Board of Foreign Missions went on record saying,

> (a) That we recommend the Western Children's Mission to our churches, and in a special way to our churches in Canada.
> (b) That we recommend the appropriation of $500 out of the general mission treasury for the Western Children's Mission.[82]

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[81] Board of Foreign Missions, Minutes, May 22-24, 1943, p. 101.

[82] Janzen and Giesbrecht, We Recommend, p. 128; cf. GCY, 1943, p. 27; Board of Foreign Missions, Minutes, May 22-24, 1943, p. 7.

The Treasurer's Financial Report of 1945 shows that not only was the designated $500 paid out to the Children's Mission in 1943, but that this Mission also received $1,492.12 in 1944 and again $1,015 in 1945 from the mission treasury of the General Conference.[83]

The vision of the Western Children's Mission leadership was "international" in scope and within a few years expanded its interest to South America. The Executive Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of that time saw the potential of this new movement and penned the following commentary in a special "Report of the Work in Foreign Missions," dated May 20, 1943:

> The Board, and especially some members of it have been impressed very forcibly by the awakening of new mission interest in certain sections of our conference. The far northwest of Canada has large areas where people live without the gospel. In some districts the children grow up illiterate, learning neither to read nor to write. Some of our young Christians have entered those fields and God has blessed their efforts with wonderful results. The work is of sufficient importance and magnitude that it deserves attention on a larger scale. It is organized as "The Western Children's Mission."
>
> The efforts of these workers among the poor and destitute in northwest have given rise to another movement. Their horizon has widened steadily until it is extended to South America, our neighboring continent. As a result of this awakening some of our young people from Canada and certain sections of the United States are now serving under other societies in Colombia and Brazil.
>
> Correspondence with these Christian workers has revived in your executive secretary the interest in South America that arose in him many years ago. Inquiries have been made at various centers in the hope of finding God's way for us in this matter. Of all the large mission fields, none has been so neglected as South America. Very few are more promising. Shall we wait upon God and ask: "Lord, what wilt Thou have us do?"[84]

At the October sessions in 1943 the Board of Foreign Missions recommended to send G. W. Peters to South America in order to

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[83] GCY, 1945, pp. 16-18.

[84] H. W. Lohrenz, "Report of the Work in Foreign Missions," Board Agenda and Minutes 1943 (pamphlet); cf. GCY, 1943, p. 15.

investigate possibilities for mission work there and bring a report to the Board at its next meetings. The Board assumed all expenses for this trip and appropriated $100 a month for the support of Peters' family.[85]

When Peters returned, he had more than a report for the Board of Foreign Missions; he had worked out a complete strategy and a recommendation which included the precise location in Colombia and a team of missionaries from the circles of the Western Children's Mission. The Board simply "resolved to accept this recommendation" and to send Mr. and Mrs. John Dyck, Mr. and Mrs. David Wirsche, and Miss Mary Schroeder "as pioneer missionaries to Colombia."[86]

Randmission

For the generation of Mennonite Brethren who lived in the churches of the western provinces of Canada from the 1930s to the 1960s, the term Randmission was as common as Stadtmission or Kindermission. While precise origin and meaning of this concept are difficult to establish, its purpose and function are less mysterious.

The word occurs for the first time in the minutes of the semiannual MB Conference of British Columbia, in November of 1940. "The name Randmission implies the scope of this mission, namely the distant territory surrounding our churches. It was born out of a deep love for Christ and for those who have neither possibility nor opportunity as we do to congregate every Sunday under the Word of God."[87] The report goes on to say that the mission began like a mustard seed, in an insignificant way.

John I. Wiebe of the congregation in Sardis, B. C.,

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[85] Board of Foreign Missions, Minutes, October 5-7, 1943, pp. 103, 107.

[86] Board of Foreign Missions, Minutes, July 7-9, 1944, p. 123.

[87] H. Willems, "Bericht [über] innere Mission. Protokoll der allgemeinen Halbjahres-Versammlung der Mennoniten Brueder-gemeinden in B.C.," November 10, 1940.

became heavily burdened with a vision for the Zerstreuten and Abgesplitterten MB church members. Wiebe translated vision into action and was the pioneer of a new venture designed to bring the Word of God to the people who were either geographically or spiritually (or both) on the fringes of the church. He began work in 1937, riding from place to place on a bicycle visiting people. His own account of an early venture is noteworthy:

> It was a great surprise to me to note how many people were open-minded and hungry to listen to the Gospel wherever I found them at their work--blowing stumps, hoeing in the garden, repairing harness or bridges or clearing land with horses. How willing they were to take off a little time to talk of that which is most needful. Many tracts, booklets and gospel portions were distributed to those who needed more light and were willing to read them prayerfully.
>
> At the end of the day, wherever I was invited for the night, I brought my notebook up to date with the names of those who were contacted and as to the success I had had.
>
> When a promising district was well canvassed, some people usually opened a home. I then made the rounds again inviting people for a certain evening or Sunday (meeting). After that they arranged among themselves how to continue the meetings. I then promised to be back on a certain day. As the attendances grew larger, schools, halls or church buildings were rented for meetings. Soon there was a regular schedule for such gatherings throughout the week and Sundays.[88]

Wiebe's devotion and spirit were contagious. At first he worked completely on his own, but soon others caught the vision for the significance of his work and supported him.

In 1938 the B.C. Conference assumed responsibility for this special mission endeavor and expanded it to many areas in the province. Thus the Randmission was actually initiated and sponsored by the British Columbia Conference to provide spiritual care for MB families who had either settled in isolated rural communities or moved into cities where there was no MB Church in the immediate vicinity. These families, in turn, provided both strong resources and a support base for missionaries working in the Kindermission.

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[88] Quoted by Penner, Reaching the Otherwise Unreached, p. 16.

Western Children's Mission of B.C.

Inspired by the Mission in Saskatchewan and touched by the devotion of men like John Wiebe, young people and older persons alike began to see mission opportunities unlimited. There were unreached people everywhere, not only on the fringes of MB communities. Their vision turned into action in 1939 when they established the "Western Children's Mission of British Columbia."

The promoters of this new venture in B.C. epitomized the Saskatchewan project not only by using the same name, but also by adopting the operational faith principle of inter-denominationalism for securing financial support for their work.[89] Even in enthusiasm and commitment the workers in B.C. were on par with their Saskatchewan precursors. In the summer of 1945, for instance, this new Mission recruited fifty volunteer young people to work in thirty-one Vacation Bible Schools with a total enrollment of a thousand children.[90] This effort demanded a stong, well-organized follow-up program throughout the year and a sustained commitment on the part of the young people, many of whom were working on farms or in gainful employment; others were studying in Bible schools, colleges, and universities. On weekends, however, they devoted their time to the Mission.

Eventually, the Randmission of the B.C. Conference and the independent Kindermission developed such close working relationships that the two became interdependent and joined forces to become the West Coast Children's Mission in 1945, a work owned and operated by the B.C. Conference.[91] But that story cannot be told here.

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[89] Penner, Reaching the Otherwise Unreached, pp. 12-13.

[90] Penner, Reaching the Otherwise Unreached, p. 21.

[91] Penner, Reaching the Otherwise unreached, pp. 20-21.

Fruitful Results

The results of these mission efforts have been rather significant for the General Conference in two specific respects. For one thing, they produced a host of long-term missionaries and church workers. The Western Children's Mission of Saskatchewan, for instance, became the preparation ground for many full-time Christian workers and "the cradle of Bethany's foreign Missionary thrust."[92] Similarly, the Randmission in British Columbia was a testing ground for young men and women called to serve in the church's worldwide mission. Men like David and Daniel Wirsche, John Dyck, Jacob and David Epp, Jacob A. Loewen, Abe Esau, Peter P. Neufeld, Henry Brucks, and others, together with their spouses, as well as numerous single persons learned to walk the missionary road in these local mission ventures. Later they stepped out onto the platform of world mission in Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe, and the Anglo American continent. Some have risen to fame in the arenas of evangelistic ministry, linguistic achievements, and literary productions, while others remained less conspicuous, though not less important, in their assigned fields of service to God and humankind. Yet of all of them it can be said that they served their generation faithfully, not counting their own lives dear to themselves.

A second contribution of these efforts to the General Conference was the vision of these people for evangelism and church planting on the American continent. The Western Children's Mission was soon incorporated as the "Saskatchewan Church Ministries." Similar changes took place in British Columbia, where the West Coast Children's Mission developed into a strong home mission venture of the Mennonite Brethren Churches of that province in 1945.[93] All mission efforts were later consolidated under the Board of Church Extension. This Board is today crossing cultural, economic, and linguistic

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[92] Epp, Proclaim Jubilee, p. 51.

[93] Penner, Reaching the Otherwise Unreached, p. 21.

frontiers, reaching various ethnic people groups in at least eight different languages in the Province of British Columbia alone.[94]

Mission to Russians and Mexicans

In more recent years, the Canadian Mennonite Brethren churches have concentrated their united mission efforts on the French-speaking Quebequois in eastern Canada, while the provincial conferences have focused on different minority groups in their respective provinces. The district conferences and local congregations in the United States have also made some efforts in evangelistic outreach on the home front. But these are not General Conference efforts and therefore outside of the parameters of this study. Yet some earlier efforts were launched by the Conference and deserve a brief review.

Mission to the Russians

The Mennonite Brethren carried with them a sense of indebtedness and a spirit of affinity toward the Russian colonists in America. After all, the Mennonites owed much to Czarist Russia, which had given them a land to live in for nearly 200 years. That was a part of their history which they could not simply take for granted. But eventually they had chosen to emigrate to America, largely for religious reasons, as had many Russian citizens. The two groups now shared a common experience of socioeconomic upheaval and cultural transition. That in itself was a bond that attracted them to each other. In addition, the Brethren had found new spiritual life in Russia and were duty-bound to share the same with their Russian neighbors in America.

About 8,000 members of the Duchobortze sect, who at one time lived in the Molotschna close to the Mennonite colonies, had settled in Northern Saskatchewan in 1899. Here they

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[94] See the reports by the Chairman and the Executive Director of the Board of Church Extension in the Minutes of the Annual Convention of the B.C. Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1982, pp. 81-88; 1983, pp. 13-20; 1984, pp. 12-17; 1985, pp. 26-32.

founded the colony of Petrovka, better known as Blaine Lake, and other settlements. A somewhat smaller group had come from the Kiev area in Russia and established such places as Kief and Max in North Dakota. A third group of Russians settled at Eagle Creek, near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, not too far from Petrovka. These were converts from the Orthodox Church and came from the poorest socioeconomic class. They had suffered severe deprivation of every type because of their faith, which they had accepted as a result of MB mission efforts in Russia.[95]

The Mennonite Brethren felt compelled to "let their light shine" in the midst of "Egyptian darkness," as one historian has noted. Hermann Fast and his wife, MB missionaries from Russia and Rumania, were working on their own among the Duchobortze since 1901.[96] Seven years later, the Conference commissioned J. F. Harms to be its missionary to the Russians in Saskatchewan and North Dakota.[97] The brethren D. A. Klaassen, David Dyck, and Gerhard Schröder, plus a number of Russian preachers, were also active in this mission. The response to the gospel was less than phenomenal and the development of the church notoriously difficult, particularly among the Duchobortze. The reasons were many, but the major cause seems to have been a Corinthian spirit of divisiveness. Baptist interference, so the record has it, caused strife and dissension and prolonged Christian infancy among them as "babes in Christ" (1 Cor. 3:1-3).[98]

In 1919, the Russian believers organized themselves as an independent Russian Mennonite Brethren Conference, but the movement lacked vigor and vision. When the Duchobortze migrated to British Columbia, the Mennonite Brethren followed

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[95] J. F. Harms, Geschichte der Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde 1860-1924 (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 241-252.

[96] Harms, Geschichte, pp. 242-243.

[97] GCY, 1908, p. 35.

[98] Harms, Geschichte, pp. 244-245.

them and began work in Grand Forks. The General Conference maintained the mission to the Russians until 1957, when the motion was made "that those assets still owned by the General M.B. Conference in property at Grand Forks, B. C. be donated and transferred to the Canadian M.B. conference."[99] That ended Conference mission interests among the Russian people in America. Whatever work is still being done is under the auspices of the respective provincial conferences of Canada.

Mission to the Mexicans

This work emerged in conjunction with evangelism among indigenous Americans in Oklahoma. Already in 1927 missionary Becker of Indiahoma reported to the conference: "Perhaps it would be important to know that we have a fair number of Mexican people in our congregation. We conduct Sunday school and have a worship service for them and other Mexican visitors every Sunday."[100] Three years later the chairman of the Committee for Foreign Mission began to sensitize the Conference, saying:

> Our work among the Indians has also given us opportunities here and there to perform minor ministries for Mexicans. These people walk about in deep darkness, but are open and receptive to the gospel. I should also add that Brother P. E. Penner has begun a work among these people along the border of South Texas. Could it perhaps be that there the Lord has given to us as a Conference a precious opportunity at our doorstep? Would it perhaps be possible to begin an important work among these people at low financial costs?[101]

The work among Mexicans in Oklahoma continued to prosper. By 1936 the need for a separate church building became crucial.[102] A year later the Board of Foreign Missions agreed with the Beckers to proceed with the founding of a station for

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[99] GCY, 1957, p. 41; cf. GCY, 1948, pp. 14, 105-106.

[100] GCY, 1927, p. 25.

[101] GCY, 1930, p. 18.

[102] GCY, 1936, p. 26; cf. A. E. Janzen, Foreign Missions: The Story of the Post Oak M.B. Mission of the Comanches and the Mexican Mission at Lawton, Oklahoma (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Foreign Missions, 1948), pp. 39-40.

Mexican people.[103] After a vivid description of the social, economic and moral conditions of the Mexicans, Janzen added:

> This field with not a single church upon it represents a challenge to any young man or woman through whose veins is surging the healthful, red blood of a sacrificial Christian manhood or womanhood and whose heart is filled with the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.[104]

This project was known as the "Lawton View Mission" and was distinct from the "Post Oak Mission" among the Indians in the same geographical region. While this remained a General Conference work until 1957, the Southern District Conference meanwhile took on Lohrenz's challenge to missionize in Southern Texas. At the 1937 Convention, Harry and Sara Neufeld were appointed as missionaries and instructed "to go forth and find a field for missionary labors among the Latin Americans on the southern border of Texas."[105]

The work in Oklahoma eventually became an integral part of the Southern District Conference, while that in Texas developed into the Latin American District Conference of about 270 members in seven relatively small congregations.[106] Individuals and local congregations of the Pacific District Conference also missionized among Spanish-speaking people of Mexican descent living in California. The eight churches that have emerged as a result of these efforts are integrated with the Pacific District Conference and are quite active evangelistically among the rapidly growing Hispanic population in California.[107]

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[103] Janzen, Foreign Missions, p. 40.

[104] Janzen, Foreign Missions, p. 41.

[105] Harry Neufeld, Eight Years Among Latin Americans (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Foreign Missions, 1947), p. 9.

[106] GCY, 1936, pp. 26-28, 40; 1985/86 Planner Directory, pp. 50-52.

[107] Cf. Ruby Dahl, "A History of the Spanish Mennonite Brethren Churches in the Dinuba and Reedley Area," Master's thesis, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California, 1969.

Chapter 11

SUSTAINING FORCES OF MISSION MOMENTUM

Introduction

The subject of this chapter is of the major resources that have served to undergird and sustain the mission momentum through the century. It would be easy to claim that these forces and resources were predominantly "spiritual" in nature. However, such a claim would be highly idealistic and hardly in keeping with the facts. "The resources needed to carry out our mission," asserted the General Secretary at the 1975 Convention in Winnipeg, "are men and money undergirded by the earnest prayers of those who send them."[1] No doubt, there have been great spiritual forces at work, forces which Mennonite Brethren could legitimately define in terms of commitment, devotional life, prayer and intercession, biblicism, sacrificial obedience, and compassion for the world. Yet these qualities find their expression through "earthen vessels" in a worldly world. While the Mennonite Brethren would like to be known for their spirituality as Christian witnesses in the world, they also realize that theirs is at best a "spirituality of the road,"[2] a road on which they tread as faltering saints in fragile sandals.

When we reflect on the forces and resources that have sustained Mennonite Brethren mission vision and action, we discover that they have not been purely spiritual; they have also been institutional, material, and human. I will describe these under four headings: (a) assumptions and observations, (b) Conference organization, (c) missionary personnel, and (d) monetary resources.

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[1] GCY, 1975, p. 62. For the meaning of GCY see Chapter 8, footnote #22.

[2] Book title by David J. Bosch, A Spirituality of the Road (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1979).

Assumptions and Observations

The Mennonite Brethren have not traveled through a century of mission on a freeway without hazards; the trip has rather been a pilgrimage with detours, harsh realities, and in-course corrections. That this is so has already become evident in earlier chapters; it will become even more obvious as I deal with the sustaining forces undergirding M.B. mission theory and practice. But before entering that discussion I want to make several more general observations and assumptions.

First, there is an inherent dialectical relationship between mission theory and practice. The two are always in tension. Just as the thinking of the Brethren has given rise to a variety of operational structures, so have these structures in turn given shape to new ideas on how to do world mission. Even the implementation of strategies and programs assumes the existence of commensurate organizations, sufficient operational funds, and suitable human personnel. To say that Mennonite Brethren mission does not consist of programs but of people is as much an ideal aspiration as it is practical reality that can be substantiated. The institutional nature of all Mennonite Brethren mission endeavors must simply be recognized as an indispensable framework within which the church sustains and carries its calling to mission in the world.

Second, Mennonite Brethren mission has essentially been church mission and cannot be treated apart from ecclesiastical polity and organization. Whenever such apparent para-church structures as the Western Children's Mission (discussed earlier) or the Africa Missions-Verein (to be dealt with in Chapter 12) emerged, they rarely--if ever--crossed denominational lines for financial support and recruitment of human resources. Not only were they inner-denominational in function; they eventually became an integral part of the Conference and developed into denominational ventures. The Mennonite Brethren have historically been remarkably loyal to their denomination (a character trait that is no longer without signs of erosion). The sustaining resources of mission

efforts are still found within the denomination and that mainly, but no longer exclusively, on the Anglo American continent.

Third, there is an ongoing need to inform the constituency of the worldwide mission situation. This includes correction of erroneous ideas. Mennonite Brethren have assumed integral cohesiveness in their mission thinking. Such philosophical categories as home missions and foreign missions, Gentile missions far away, and Indian missions on the American frontier, Jewish missions and city missions, and several other categories have been an integral part of denominational efforts. On the one hand, the interrelatedness of individual efforts must be recognized as a positive factor in MB mission. On the other hand, there is also a negative side, namely a fragmentation of mission that is not understood at the grassroots level of the supporting constituency. Mennonite Brethren find it hard to think mission in structurally wholistic terms. The Board of Missions recognized this weakness as early as 1963. In his triennial report to the Convention, the Recording Secretary clearly stated:

> A great deal of work must be done in our home constituency to interpret the program of the "New Mission World" in which we live. This interpretation must be done jointly by missionaries, office secretariat and Board.[3]

Although the Secretary did not define the "New Mission World," he obviously meant the post-World War II era, when revolutionary changes on a global scale impacted the mission of the church in unprecedented ways.

In an attempt to interpret the new era of mission after World War II to the home constituency, the mission Secretariat published an informative and provocative document in 1962 entitled, Mennonite Brethren Missions Today: A Statement to the Brotherhood from the Board of Missions. Some of the introductory paragraphs already indicate the tenor of its content:

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[3] GCY, 1963, p. 59; cf. GCY, 1966, pp. 57 and 59.

> A new era has broken upon us. Just when the Christian forces were ready to make the great push to evangelize the world in our generation, the world scene changed, and mission forces throughout the world suffered some of the greatest reverses in the history of modern missions, as in China, sections of Indo-China, in the Arab world, in Colombia, in Cuba, in the Congo, in Spain and most recently in Ceylon. Communism, Romanism, nationalism and ancient pagan religions are conspiring against the Gospel of God and against his Christ. No geographical area has remained unaffected and no phase of mission service remains unaltered. New approaches are developing, new patterns are emerging, new principles are guiding the work and new voices are speaking.
>
> Truly, this is missions in a revolutionary world--missions in crisis. The missionary finds himself an "uitlander in no man's land," while missions seek for light and guidance in a world of tensions, conflicts, confusion, rivalries and hostility. These are momentous days for evil or for good.[4]

Unfortunately, however, that interpretation of which the Secretariat speaks has never achieved its desired goal, either at the grassroots level or at the leadership level of the constituency. Such concepts as "the new world" and the all-embracing term "world mission" bear little meaning to the average church member. World mission still means "foreign missions," mission far away, mission in the spirit of the colonial era. At the leadership level, the Brethren seem to do mission best when they compartmentalize, even if that means administrative duplication at increased financial costs. The dual mandate of home missions and foreign missions referred to earlier still dominates mission thinking.

Fourth, the formation of structures implies an ongoing, dynamic process, a sense of reformation. Therein lies the potential for leaders to move creatively in new directions and who rethink and reshape mission patterns. Any reform of institutional structures holds hope for constructive change before these structures become obsolete and static. The current discussion about internationalization of mission is an encouraging sign on the horizon of positive developments

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[4] [J. B. Toews], Mennonite Brethren Missions Today: A Statement to the Brotherhood from the Board of Missions (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Missions, 1962), p. 11.

toward Mennonite Brethren world mission at the dawn of millennium three.

Finally, Mennonite Brethren have at times been challenged within their own denomination to accept their mission program on the premise of clearly defined parameters and operational principles. In a recent book on Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions, G. W. Peters identifies six periods of MB mission administration: (a) orientation, 1885-1896; (b) stabilization, 1896-1909; (c) conference jurisdiction, 1909-1936; (d) board centralization, 1936-1963; (e) reorientation, 1963-1969; and (f) realignment, 1969-1980.[5] The validity of this interpretation lies in that it adheres closely to the periodic changes in mission administration which either gave rise to those revisions or resulted from them.

Such an approach, however, has several inherent weaknesses affecting both structure and philosophy of mission. For one thing, the Constitution concerns itself with the comprehensive organization of the Conference from which mission emanates. All mission endeavors and their structures are subsumed within the larger Conference framework. Furthermore, to characterize the periods of mission management as primarily parallel with the constitutional revisions overlooks such important factors as the larger world mission context and the character of mission administration, which influenced the nature of a given period as much as--if not more than--the constitutional revision.

To treat the nature of mission structures in rigidly proscriptive rather than broadly descriptive terms is less that satisfactory. Such chronological rigidity, which allows little flexibility or overlap in the transition from one period to the next, is not even acceptable for the Conference organization, let alone its mission. While the ending dates for each period suggested by Peters (with the exception of

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[5] G. W. Peters, Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions (Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1984), p. 85; cf. pp. 85-123, 197-201.

the last one) remain unalterable, allowance for time of the constitutional revision process must be made. Then, too, Peters deals only with what the Mennonite Brethren refer to as "foreign missions." Thereby he reinforces the unfortunate--if not erroneous--way of thinking that mission far away is the most authentic MB mission. It will be helpful, therefore, to outline the Conference organizational development as the basic framework for sustaining Mennonite Brethren Missions as a whole, and not only the foreign components.

The Conference Organization

I have earlier described the Conference as an organic association of Mennonite Brethren congregations which have entered a covenant relationship with each other for the purpose of carrying out both their common calling and corporate mission in the world. All local churches belonging to the Conference "shall strive earnestly 'to keep the unity of the Spirit in the Bond of peace' (Eph. 4:3) and to walk 'by the same rule' (Phil. 3:16."[6] This biblical polity statement applies to both historical development and current organization.

Historical Development

Historically, the means to form concepts had been in process for nearly a century before the Conference was given its present shape. But such is the nature of church polity: it is perfected through change and development (Table 5). Several phases of that structure merit descriptive identification.

Phase One: 1878/9-1900. The first phase of the Conference, from its beginning in 1878 to 1900, bore no name by which it could be identified and had no official constitution by which its operations were directed. All

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[6] Constitution of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America ([Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House], 1936), p. 7.

Table 5

Historical Development of Conference Organizations

Phase	Period	Name and Nature of Organization	Constitutional Revision
One	1878-1900	Conference founded 1878/1879; no official name adopted; no constitution Weakness: Ambivalent in identity, structure and objectives	1896-1900
Two	1900-1909	American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union Organization: (a) Mennoniten Brüder Missions Vereinigung, including all member-congregations; (b) Verwaltungskomitee of 60 persons, including a 9-member Board of Directors (Trustees); and (c) 4-member Ausführungskomitee or Executive Board Weakness: Confining all denominational functions to mission work	1903-1909
Three	1909-1936	The Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America Organization: (a) 4-member Executive Committee consisting of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer; (b) 9-member Board of Directors (Trustees) Weakness: Conference jurisdiction limiting autonomy of local congregations	1930-1936
Four	1936-1963	The Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America Executive Officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary Boards and Committees: (a) Committee of Reference and Counsel; (b) Board of Trustees (Directors); (c) Board of Foreign Missions; (d) Committee for Home Missions; (e) Committee for City Missions; (f) Committee for Publications; (g) Educational Committee; (h) Committee of General Welfare and Public Relations; (i) Auditing Committee; (j) Program Committee Weakness: (a) More office than task-conscious; (b) heavily committee-oriented; (c) provincial in scope; (d) restricting autonomy of congregations	1951-1963
Five	1963-1981	The General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches Executive Officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer Boards and Committees: (a) Board of Reference and Counsel; (b) Board of Trustees (Directors); (c) Board of Missions [and Services--after 1966]; (d) Committee on Home Missions; (e) Board of Christian Literature; (f) Committee on Church Schools; (g) Board of General Welfare and Public Relations (terminated 1966); (h) Youth Committee; (i) Auditing Committee; (j) Program Committee Weakness: Dropping the adjective "Foreign" from the Board of Foreign Missions appears to be more a change of language than of philosophy and function	1972-1981
Six	1981-	The General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches Executive Officers: Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Secretary Boards and Committees: (a) Board of Reference and Counsel; (b) Board of Christian Education; (c) Board of Christian Literature; (d) Board of Mass Media; (e) Board of Missions and Services; (f) Board of Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary; (g) Board of Trustees; (h) Executive Committee; (i) Nominating Committee; (j) Program Committee	open

Conference decisions were made at the annual sessions. But that does not mean that the denomination was static. On the contrary: the Brethren dealt with weighty matters, including a comprehensive mission program. In 1936, the Brethren reflected on this early phase and described it in the following words:

> The Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America dates back to the time when Brethren from Kansas met in Nebraska for a consultation with representatives from the congregations of the latter State on September 28, 1878. The following day was observed as a special celebration Sunday on which devotional messages and missionary sermons were alternately presented. A love meal (Liebesmahl) enhanced the spirit of the fellowhsip. September 30 and October 1, were set aside to raise questions and to discuss a variety of issues which provided the foundation of a common task and spiritual fellowship. In the fall of the following year the congregations of Minnesota and Dakota also sent representatives to the [second] Convention [when the Conference was officially founded].
>
> As the years passed, the Conference expanded and personal resources emerged. With that also surfaced a sense of need to engage in home and foreign mission. Workers were being employed in the home mission field and missionaries were sent into Gentile mission work both to [American] Indians and to India.[7]

During this entire phase of orientation the Conference convened annually under a fairly stable leadership structure. The record of the first official Convention of 1879 named a chairman, a vice-chairman, a secretary, and three other men who read, approved, and signed the Protokoll or minutes. A similar structure was maintained for subsequent conventions.[8] Although neither official designation nor organization was spelled out in concrete terms, the Conference had a sense of direction with regard to mission. In fact, its missionary consciousness was always in the forefront of its calling.

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[7] Konstitution der Konferenz der Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde von Nord-Amerika ([Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House], 1936), p. 3.

[8] Jakob D. Thiessen, Minutes of the First Four Five Sessions of the M.B. General Conference [1878] 1879-1882, pp. 35, 47, 55, 58; a handwritten document contained in a ledger. For a transcribed typed copy see Chapter 8, footnote #55; cf. GCY, 1884, p. 15.

What was lacking was the organizational vehicle to implement that calling in an explicit and formal manner.

The problem became increasingly serious at five different stages during the 1890s: (a) when the Brethren appointed a provisional committee in 1892 to begin work among American Indians, patterned after the work the General Conference Mennonites had already been doing for some time; (b) when they actually sent their first missionaries across ethnic frontiers to Indians on American soil in 1894; (c) when the German Baptists sent two MB missionary couples to Cameroon in 1895-1896 because the Brethren themselves had no field in Africa; (d) when in 1899 the Mennonite Brethren commissioned their first missionaries to India with the specific charge to evangelize and plant the first MB church outside the boundaries of Russia and America;[9] and (e) when they found it legally impossible to carry on their work without organizing a "society or a mission corporation" or some form of chartered organization to control their vision and action.[10] In order to become a legitimate religious body and bonafide missionary sending agency, they had to submit an official constitution with charter and bylaws to the State Government for registration purposes.

Phase Two: 1900-1909. The second phase emerged as a result of a deeply felt need which had surfaced during the first and led to two major organizational decisions. The first decision had profound legal implications for the Brethren. On October 24, 1900, they drafted and adopted a Charter by which they could become officially incorporated in the State of Kansas as Mennoniten Brüder Missions Vereinigung, or Mennonite Brethren Mission Union.[11] It is interesting to note to what extent the whole question of mission really dominated their thinking. Ironically, the

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[9] GCY, 1892, p. 22; 1894, p. 12; 1898, pp. 18-19.

[10] Statuten der Mennoniten Brüder Missions Vereinigung (Lehigh, KS: "S.S. Bote," 1901), p. 1.

[11] Konstitution, 1936, p. 3.

entire Conference was in effect not structured as an ecclesiastical body, but as a missionary organization that was both intentional and dimensional in character. But to that I must return later.

The second important structural decision was made in 1905 when the Brethren adopted the resolution (which was never implemented) to organize the Conference into five districts (Figure 8): (a) Oklahoma, (b) Kansas, (c) Nebraska and Colorado, (d) Minnesota, South and North Dakota, and (e) Canada. At this time the fifth proposed district included only two prairie provinces--Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Mennonite Brethren living in these provinces had either moved there from the United States or were the fruit of the labors of itinerant evangelists from south of the border. In addition, small congregations had by now begun to form in Oregon and California on the West Coast; these were given the choice which of the districts they wanted to join.[12]

The idea of districts, however, was not entirely new. As early as 1902, the Canadian delegates at the Convention in Washita County, Oklahoma, raised the question of Conference expansion into two districts. The rationale given was (a) the unsuitable time of the conference for delegates from Canada; (b) the great distance between the north and the south, making communication and travel difficult; and (c) the cost involved, which had become a financial burden for the brethren from the north.[13]

The following year the Convention in York and Hamilton Counties, Nebraska, appointed a committee to deal with this issue of expansion. The urgency can be seen in the fact that the committee presented a sixfold recommendation at the same session. It was then recommended that the Conference reorganize into two districts: the northern was to include the Dakotas, Minnesota, Manitoba, and the Canadian Northwest (Saskatchewan); the southern was to consist of Oklahoma,

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[12] GCY, 1905, pp. 15-17.

[13] GCY, 1902, p. 11.

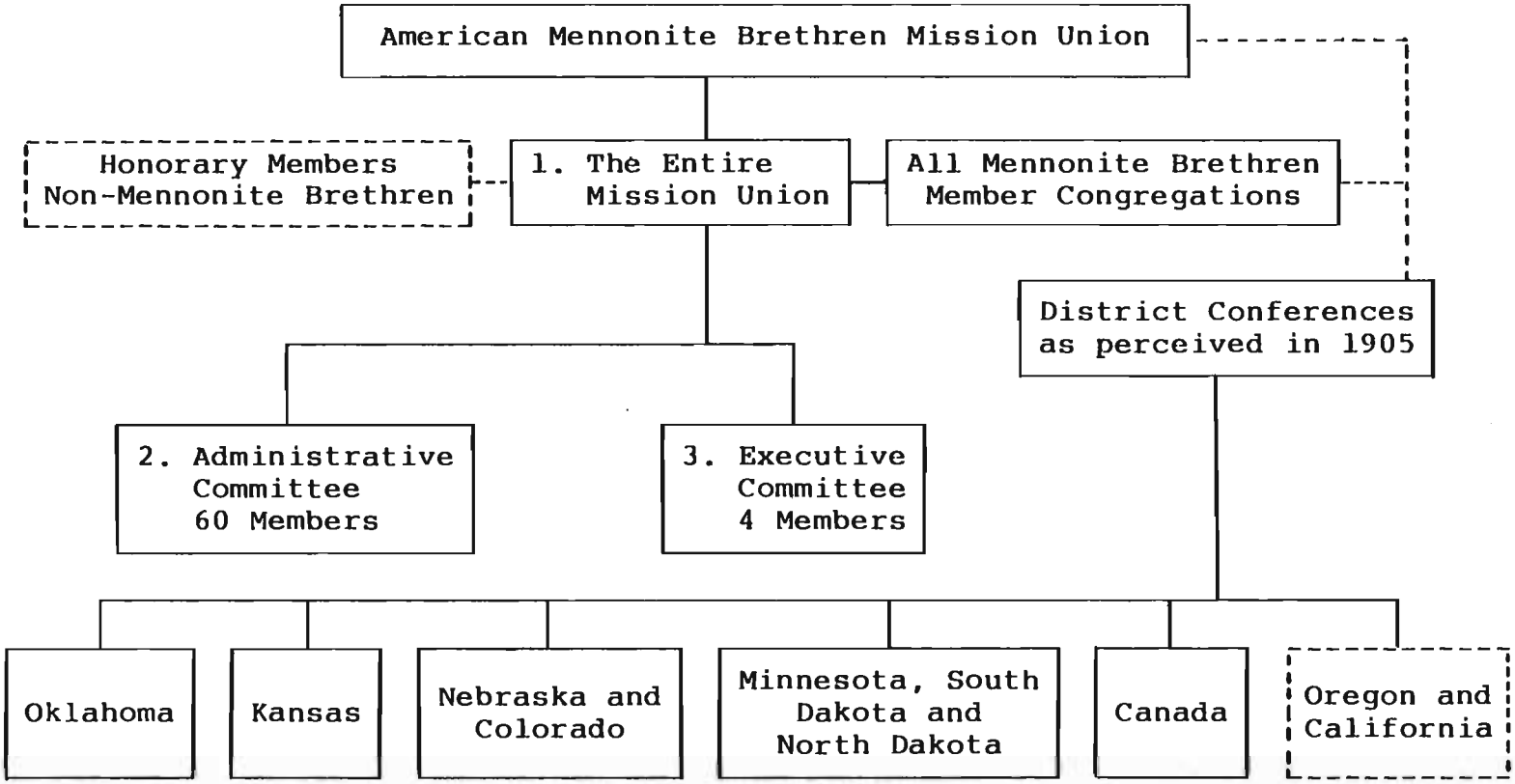

Figure 8

Earliest Vision of Conference Organization 1905-1908

Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado. The congregations in Oregon were free to choose one of the districts for membership. The committee also recommended that each district convene annually and the General Conference triennially. Although the recommendation was unanimously approved, it was never implemented in the form adopted.[14] This indecision caused some tensions and became a serious issue in 1905. But again the vision of expansion was not carried out until 1909, when the pressure from the north was evidently overbearing.[15] In the process of revision of the second constitution, the General Conference was again restructured and the demarcation of the districts clearly drawn, as I will show in Figure 9.

Phase Three: 1909-1936. The third phase grew out of limitations imposed by the second. The legal Charter of 1900 actually restricted the Brethren to one exclusive activity, namely mission. They were a "Mission Union," nothing else. But that was hardly in keeping with their vision and need. Thus in 1906 they applied to the Kansas State Charter Board for an amendment of the Constitution that would allow them to change the name from "American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union" to "The Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America."[16] The amendment was adopted at the 1908 Convention and published the following year. Thereafter, the Conference was free to expand its vision, spell out its purpose, implement its perceived mandate from God, and aggressively pursue its objectives as follows:

> (a) To preach the gospel of Christ through missionaries and evangelists to people in home and foreign lands;
>
> (b) To unite into fellowship of the Son of God all those souls who have come to believe in Christ, and to instruct them from the Word of God for their own nurture and instruction;

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[14] GCY, 1903, pp. 8-9.

[15] GCY, 1905, pp. 16-17; 1909, pp. 6-10, 35, 48.

[16] Konstitution der Mennoniten Brüder-Gemeinde von Nord-Amerika ([Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House], 1909), p. 2

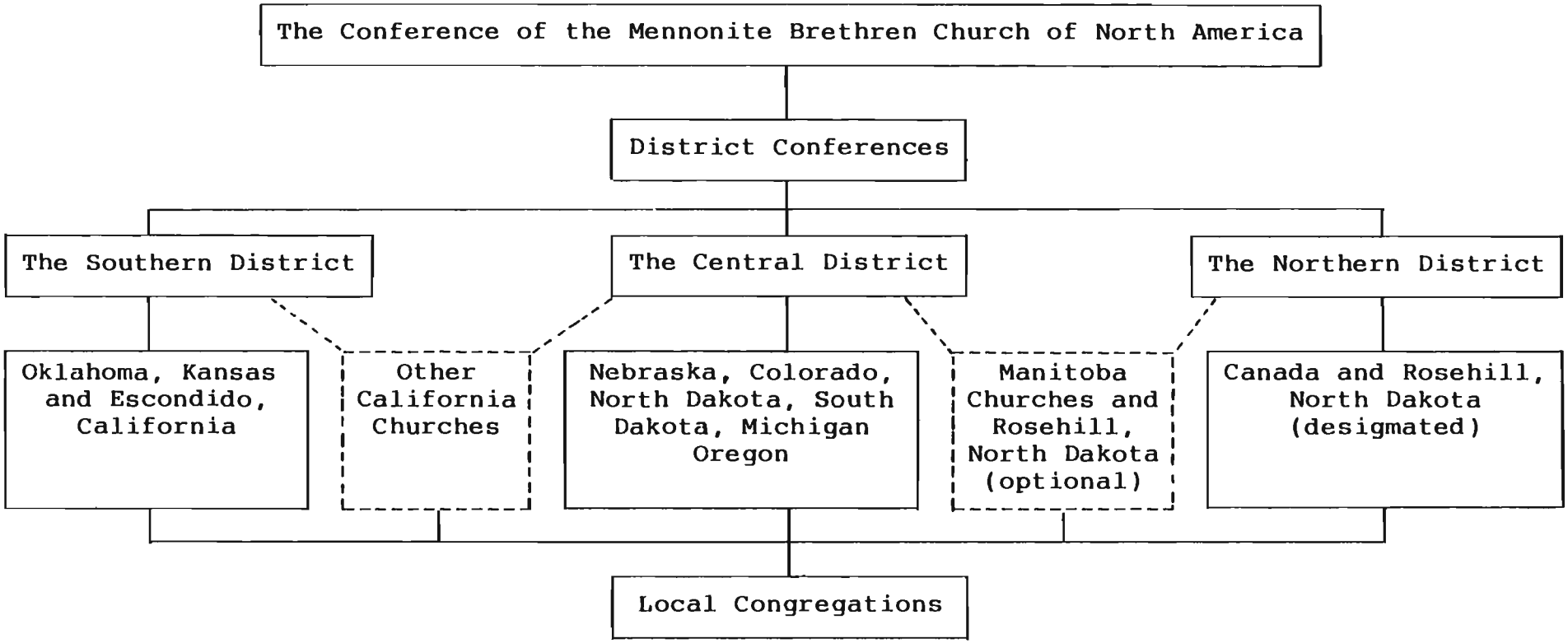
The Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America
District Conferences
The Southern District
The Central District
The Northern District
Oklahoma, Kansas and Escondido, California
Other California Churches
Nebraska, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Michigan Oregon
Manitoba Churches and Rosehill, North Dakota (optional)
Canada and Rosehill, North Dakota (desigmated)
Local Congregations

Figure 9

First Model of Conference Structure 1909

> (c) To establish and maintain benevolent institutions and schools as well as to publish and distribute the Zionsbote, Sunday school materials, and Christian literature in general;
>
> (d) To employ, commission, and support missionaries, evangelists, deaconesses, teachers, and editors according to the rules of the Bylaws;
>
> (e) To collect needed funds through receipts of contributions, gifts, and endowments in order to open, furnish, and maintain mission stations.[17]

Again, the high priority given to mission is evident. Four of the five statements are either in full or in part directly related to mission work. Organizational structure and objectives, however, went beyond missional intention to include educational and publishing institutions.

The expansion of the Conference envisioned in 1903 and 1905 finally became a reality in 1909, albeit in a different form, as suggested earlier (Figure 9). Upon the recommendation of Elder Schellenberg, the Conference was now divided into three (rather arbitrary) districts: (a) The Southern District was made up of Oklahoma, Kansas, and the congregation in Escondido, California, giving the other congregations of this state the choice of joining either the Southern or Central District. (b) The Central District embraced the local churches of Nebraska, Colorado, North and South Dakota, Minnesota, and Michigan in the east and Oregon in the west. (c) The Northern District included Canada and the congregation of Rosehill in North Dakota. For practical purposes the congregations in Manitoba and the Rosehill church were given a choice to join either the Northern or Central District. The churches in California (except Escondido) were free to affiliate with any of the districts.[18]

This division was important on several counts: (a) It gave Canadian members a stronger voice and greater visibility

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[17] Konstitution, 1909, p. 3; cf. Constitution, 1936, pp. 1-2; Konstitution, 1936, p. 5.

[18] GCY, 1909, p. 10. G. W. Peters is apparently in error when he states that the Conference was at this time divided into four districts (Foundation, p. 89); cf. A. E. Janzen and Herbert Giesbrecht, eds., We Recommend (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1978), pp. 28-29.

in the Conference; (b) it decentralized the authority of General Conference leadership; (c) it placed more responsibility for local and regional concerns on the districts; (d) it allowed the Conference to concentrate on the larger issues, such as foreign mission, publication, and higher education; and (e) it called for triennial conventions on the General Conference level, while allowing the districts to meet annually.[19]

Phase Four: 1936-1963. The fourth phase of the Conference organization gave rise to significant theological, ecclesiological, and missiological considerations.[20] How could the Mennonite Brethren make the claim to being one church? They recognized that there was one church universal, but that was surely more inclusive than the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America. Moreover, how could the local churches ever express their uniqueness and autonomy if the whole Conference constituted the church? Furthermore, how could the Mennonite Brethren expand their missionary horizons if the institutional name carried geographical implications limiting them to continental North America?

The name became a real obstacle in 1948 when the Conference at the Convention in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, officially accepted into membership the MB Churches of Brazil and Paraguay as the "South American District Conference"[21] (Figure 10). This action, as well as the missionary expansion in Africa, Asia, and various Latin American countries, brought increased uneasiness to some perceptive leaders about the narrow, provincial mentality inherent in the Conference nomenclature. Therefore, in 1951 the Conference again decided to rewrite the Constitution.[22] At the 1960 Centennial Convention in Reedley, the Board of Reference

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[19] Cf. GCY, 1903, pp. 8-9; 1909, pp. 6-10.

[20] GCY, 1963, pp. 43-45.

[21] GCY, 1948, pp. 2-3.

[22] GCY, 1951, pp. 15-17.

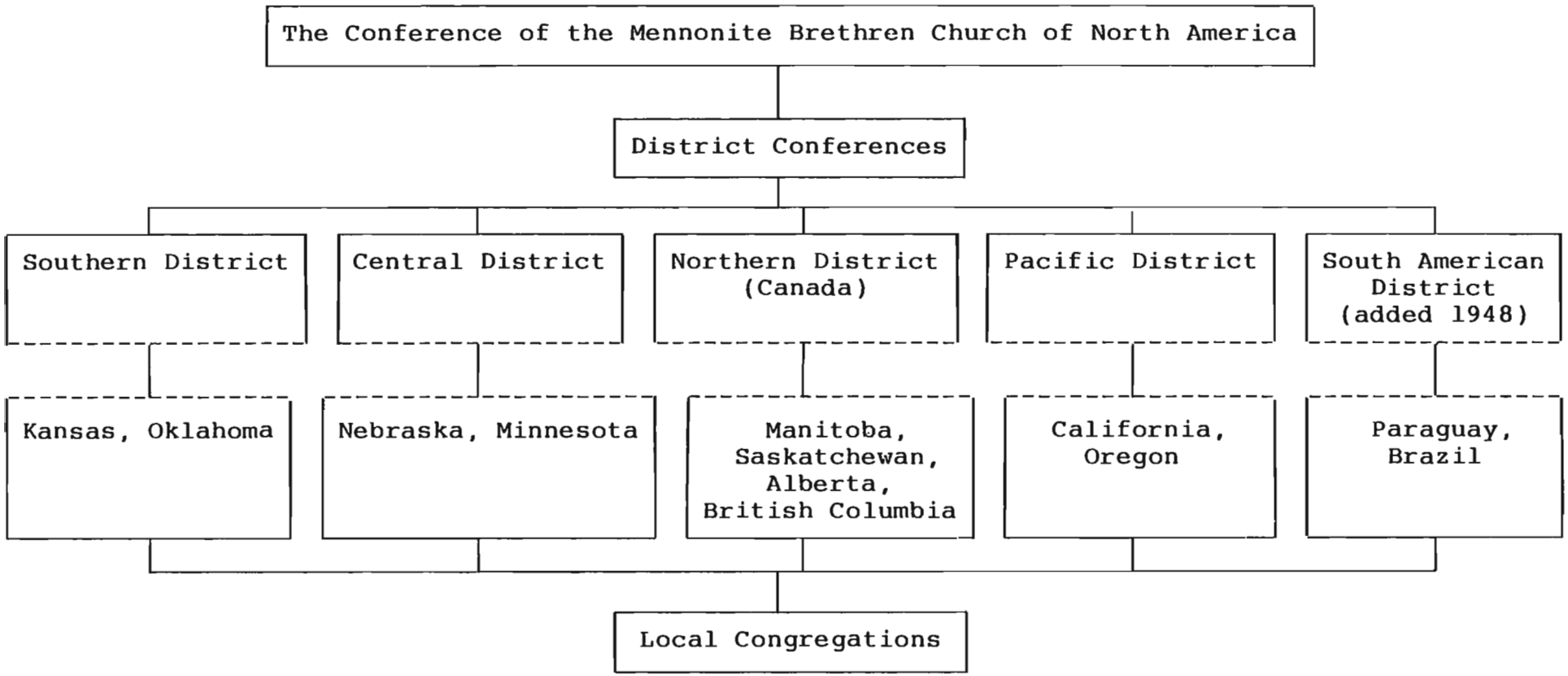

Figure 10

Relational Demarcation of District Conferences 1936

and Counsel proposed that the name of the brotherhood be changed from "The Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America" to "The General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches." The proposal was officially adopted at the Convention in 1963.[23]

A parenthetical comment might be in place here. The Fourth Phase is missionarily the most important era in MB history, embracing the largest part of what I have called "The Golden Age of Mennonite Brethren Mission, 1945-1966." With the end of the global conflict in 1945 the MB experienced an unprecedented missional explosion in every direction. Only the sky was the limit: the vision for the world was greatly expanded. The Conference took over several independent mission endeavors and entered several new countries; mission personnel increased to an all-time high; financial contributions rose to match prevailing needs; the Mennonite Brethren experienced a genuine renewal in mission.

Phase Five: 1963-1981. The fifth phase of the Conference reaped several distinct benefits from the fourth: (a) Theoretically, the new name implied a more open and inclusive spirit than the previous designation. (b) The change from the singular "church" to the plural "churches" was theologically and ecclesiologically a move in the right direction. A conference of churches suggests both autonomy for each congregation and interdependence within the brotherhood. Local congregations administer their own affairs, yet they have banded together for cooperative action and corporate mission in the world. (c) The elimination of the possessive object, "North America," indicated that the Mennonite Brethren Conference could not be limited to one continent, but should be seen as an extended fellowship of Believers' Churches around the world, including all congregations who voluntarily and by conviction adhered to the Mennonite Brethren

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[23] Constitution of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches (no p. and p., 1963), p. 21.

Confession of Faith adopted in 1902.[24] (d) The idea of internationalization, of broadening the scope of mission from a provincial to a global endeavor, appeared at the Conference level for the first time. (The Board of Foreign Missions had entertained such ideas already in 1960, but nothing had become of it.)[25]

In keeping with the prevailing spirit of mission within the MB churches, the Board of Reference and Counsel made two positive statements about the development of an international Conference structure. The first was made at the 1963 Convention in Winnipeg when this Board recommended to the Conference the change of name, explaining:

> If we would call our brotherhood by the name, "THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCHES," this designation clearly transcends all national and geographical boundaries and would be fully consonant with our basic objectives of world-wide fellowship and mission. Under this name it would be a simple matter to bring any number of national area conferences into one General Conference, as, for example, the India Conference, the Japanese Conference, the Paraguayan Conference, the Brazilian Conference, the Colombian Conference, the African Conference, the European Conference, the Canadian Conference, the United States Conference, etc. Together we are THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCHES.[26]

In retrospect, one can only salute this Board for such vision and rhetoric and wish that their dreams could have been realized. It is, therefore, disappointing, to say the least, that the "simple matter to bring any number of national area conferences into one General Conference" has structurally never happened, even though the idea has been entertained for some time.

The other significant statement made by the Board of Reference and Counsel and the resolution adopted at the next

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[24] For a full treatment of early Confessions of Faith see Abram John Klassen, "The Roots and Development of Mennonite Brethren Theology to 1914," unpublished Master's thesis, Wheaton College Graduate School, 1966, pp. 169-187.

[25] GCY, 1960, p. 98.

[26] GCY, 1963, p. 44.

triennium Convention in Corn, Oklahoma, outlined principles, purpose, and structure for organizing a "World Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches." The proposal reads in part:

> For some time the Board of Reference and Counsel of the General Conference has been aware of certain problems which arise out of an attempt to structure the General Conference as an organization including Mennonite Brethren churches around the world. An attempt has been made to study and analyze these problems and to propose the kind of organizational structure which will produce a proper inter-relationship between the various national conferences. Mennonite Brethren Churches outside of Canada and the United States were begun largely as projects of our Foreign Missions Board. Some of these churches have become indigenous or semi-indigenous congregations and conferences. An organizational relationship recognizing this change of status and allowing for an ongoing change of status on the part of other churches in our mission fields produces the need for a re-thinking of the present relationships which exist and the need for means of adjustment of organizational relationships now and in the future.[27]

The Board of Reference and Counsel expressed caution in proceeding with the proposal of organizing such a World Conference, for two reasons: (a) It "might easily become an artificial imposition of an organization on other national conferences which would not provide a workable solution to problems at hand"; and (b) "there are some functions which concern only Canada and the United States" and thus require that "some kind of organization exclusive of other national conferences . . . be maintained on this level."[28] Again, it appears that the rhetoric of caution was taken more seriously than the proposal itself.

The 1970s made additional revisions mandatory. Two major issues surfaced at this time. One had to do with the relationship of the Canadian Mennonite Brethren Conference to that of the United States; and the other centered on the relationship of the Board of the MB Biblical Seminary and the Board of Missions and Services to both conferences. The question had to do with incorporation of these two Conference

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[27] GCY, 1966, pp. 17-18.

[28] GCY, 1966, pp. 18-19.

institutions. Significant constitutional revisions were brought before the Conference delegates for approval at the 1975 Convention in Winnipeg,[29] but the final adoption of the new Constitution occurred only in 1981.[30]

Phase Six: 1981 to present. The present phase is again entirely North American in structure. That is indeed regrettable, especially in view of the noble vision which the Board of Reference and Counsel presented to the Convention in 1963 with regard to the change of name and again in 1966 with regard to a World Conference. As already indicated that vision has never been realized. Even the South American District Conference that was officially accepted into membership in 1948[31] has long since been removed from such structural affinity. The District Conference listed as "Latin America" on the roster of conferences (Figure 11), is merely the Hispanic component of the MB churches in Texas and thus an integral part of the United States Area Conference rather than an expression of the grand international vision.

The structural vision expressed by the Board of Reference and Counsel in 1963 and 1966, and the gains made by the mission leadership in the 1950s and 1960s in a move toward a truly international and multiethnic Mennonite Brethren world mission have been severely retarded during the 1970s and early 1980s.

Theologically, however, there seems to be emerging a new sense of fraternity and unity between Mennonite Brethren congregations in various countries. It is this theological affinity coupled with a sense of divine calling to a common mission that forms the basis for the projected Mennonite

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29 GCY, 1975, pp. 129-135.

30 "Constitution and Bylaws of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches" (1981 ed.), adopted at the 55th Session General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches, St. Catharines, Ontario, August 7-11, 1981. (Xeroxed.)

31 GCY, 1948, pp. 2-3.

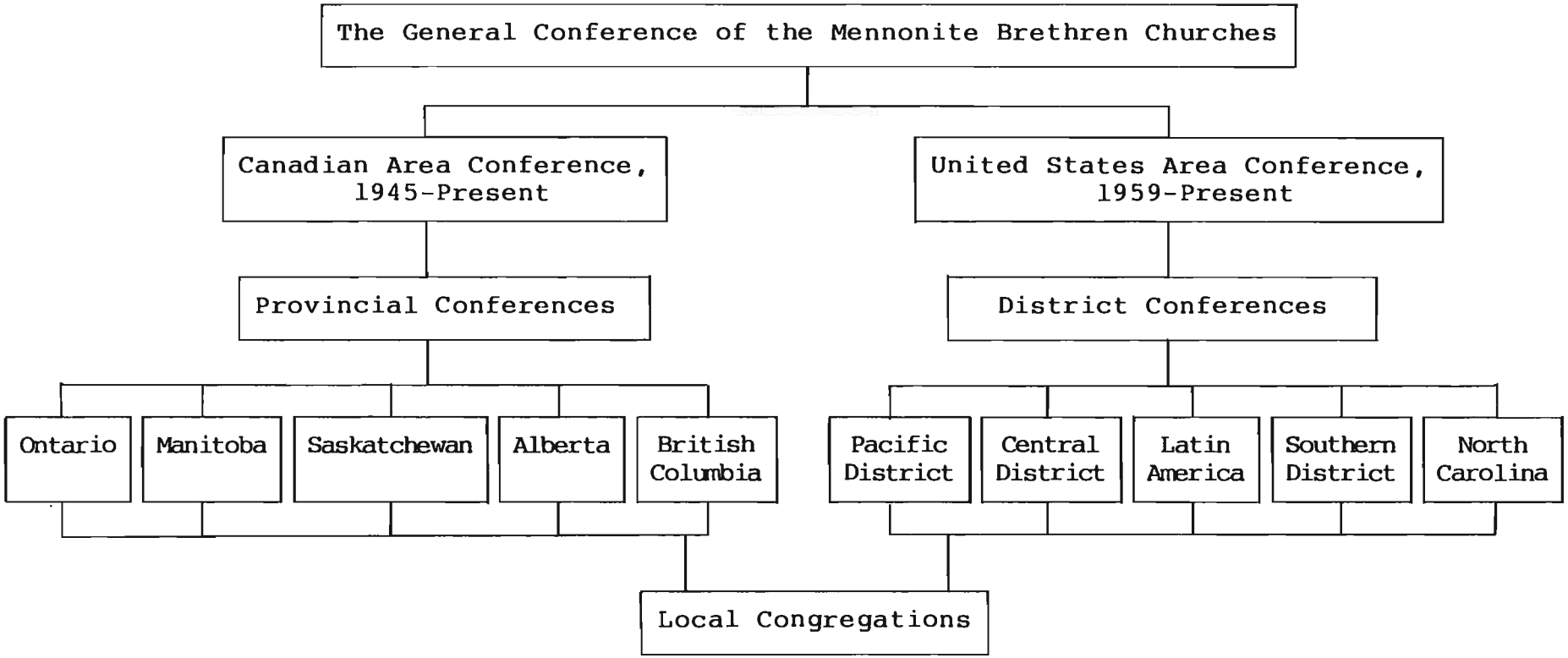

Figure 11

Relationship of the General Conference to Its Constituent Conferences

Source: Adapted from Constitution and Bylaws of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1981.

Brethren World Fellowship which is to convene in Curitiba, Brazil, in February of 1988. Although it is too early to predict what the outcome of this venture might be, it is not too early to pray and hope that it might pave the way for a truly worldwide Mennonite Brethren Church united in one faith, under one Lord, with one gospel, committed to one world mission of the MB Conference around the globe.

Current Organization

As shown above (Table 5, p. 444), the present General Conference organization consists of three Committees and seven Boards. Two of the boards are incorporated under separate charters and operate in accordance with the By-Laws set forth in their respective Constitutions (Figure 12).

It is not within the scope of this study to describe and analyze the purpose and function of each Conference Board and Committee. Yet the transcendent nature of the Executive Committee, the Board of Reference and Counsel, the Board of the MB Biblical Seminary, and the Board of Trustees demand a comment or two. The Board of Missions and Services will be considered in a separate chapter.

The Executive Committee. This three-member Committee consists of the officers titled, "Moderator," "Assistant Moderator," and "Secretary." The role of the Moderator is to preside at the Conventions and to chair the meetings of his own Committee as well as those of the Board of Reference and Counsel. His overall task is to ensure that the affairs of the Conference are carried out in an orderly and satisfactory manner. The Assistant must assume the role when called upon or when the Moderator is absent. The Secretary records the minutes of all Conventions and meetings chaired by the Moderator or his Assistant; he is also responsible for the publication of the General Conference Yearbook as well as for all official correspondence.

The job description of the three officers is stated as follows:

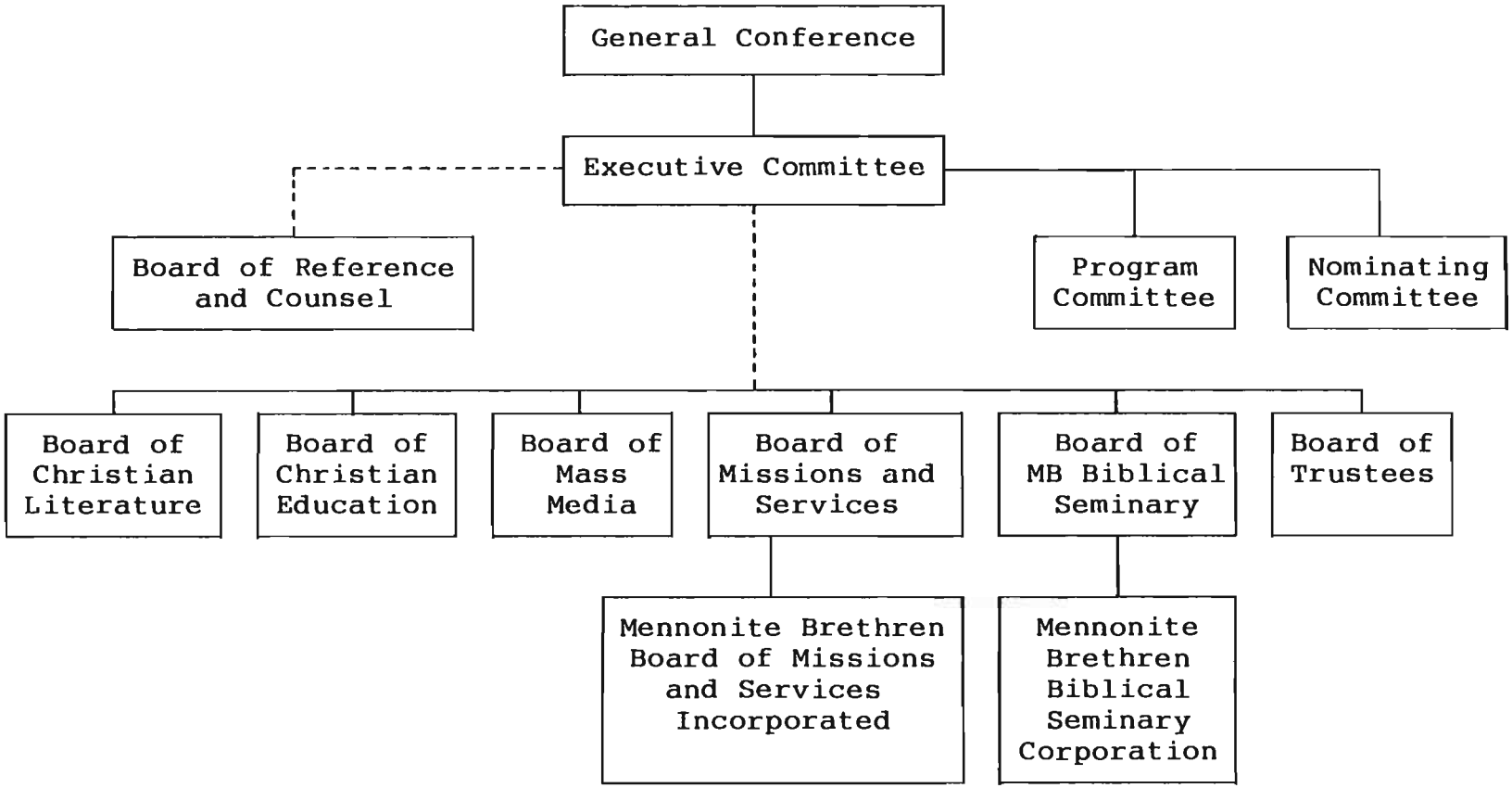

Figure 12

Current Structure of the General Conference

Source: Constitution and Bylaws of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1981.

> The Executive Committee shall be responsible for those affairs of the conference not within the jurisdiction of any particular board or committee. It may arrange consultative meetings with boards, committees and representatives therefrom as it deems necessary or as assigned by the Board of Reference and Counsel. The Executive Committee shall be ex-officio members of the Program Committee.[32]

In addition, the members of the Executive Committee are also members of the Program Committee, ex-officio members of the Board of Reference and Counsel, and function in other Boards and Committees either as officially designated or functionally needed. They serve the brotherhood in both administrative and advisory capacities with significant influence on the Board of Missions and Services.

The Board of Reference and Counsel. In addition to the members of the Executive Committee, this Board has at least seven other elected members: three from each National Area Conference (USA and Canada) and one member-at-large. The purpose statement reads:

> The Board shall watch over the spiritual life of the Conference and its churches and give guidance and direction in matters of faith, doctrine and Christian life. It shall, when deemed necessary, initiate appropriate action or serve as a reference body in issues of spiritual and social concern.[33]

This Board also serves as an advisory body to the national conferences, has responsibility to uphold the teaching of the Word of God, exercises a disciplinary function when member congregations violate Conference policies and principles, is responsible for arranging study and faith conferences, and has interim authority to deal with all matters pertaining to Conference affairs between Conventions. On numerous occasions this Board has given remarkably prudent counsel pertaining to the mission work of the Conference and its relationship to the younger churches, as I will show later.

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[32] Constitution and Bylaws, 1981, p. 21.

[33] Constitution and Bylaws, 1981, p. 22.

The Board of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. Like the Board of Missions and Services, the Board of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary has its own legal status and is incorporated under its own name, "Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary Corporation."[34] The Board consists of at least ten voting members elected by the Conference: four from each of the two national conferences, one or two from either of the conferences, and the President as ex-officio member. In addition, there are five nonvoting members, including one from the Board of Missions and Services.

The missionary interest of the Board members is best seen in the Seminary's vital role in shaping MB mission thinking and action. The Seminary is the only General Conference theological institution with a three-year graduate program in world mission, leading to a Master of Divinity degree.[35] Nearly one out of five students is currently enrolled in this program. The Seminary has also been responsible for the Church Mission Institute, an intensive missionary training program held every summer since 1973 for all MB mission candidates.[36] Furthermore, the Seminary has developed a special Center for Training in Mission/ Evangelism with both academic and practical curricular components built into it.[37] Although the program will be activated first in September of 1986, the Center has the potential for enhancing the missionary spirit on campus and for enlarging the vision of true world mission throughout the constituency.

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[34] Constitution and Bylaws, 1981, p. 27.

[35] For a description of the mission program see the current edition of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary Catalog 1984-1986, pp. 6-8, 29, 50-55.

[36] See Hans Kasdorf, "Church Mission Institute," an unpublished paper, presented to the faculty, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, 1977; also Hans Kasdorf's annual reports of the Church Mission Institute (1973-1985), presented to the Seminary in Fresno and the Board of Missions and Services, on file at the Center for Training in Mission, Biblical Seminary, Fresno.

[37] "Proposal for the Center for Training in Mission/ Evangelism," Biblical Seminary, Fresno, 1984, p. 1.

The Seminary also sees itself as fulfilling a specific role through the graduates, who serve the worldwide church in pastoral, educational, evangelistic, missionary, and other professional capacities. Therein lies the greater mission of the Mennonite Brethren Church to the world.

All of this gives evidence that the Seminary has remained faithful to the vision of its founding fathers, who were deeply concerned that both curricular course work and practical Christian life should foster "evangelistic fervor and missionary passion."[38] That concern is carried through to this day, as the Seminary catalogs reflect.

> The Seminary is a school of missions. It has been the compassion of the Mennonite Brethren Church since its inception, that men everywhere should be saved. Missions has [sic] been the keynote of its life and history. Therefore, the purpose of the Mennonite Brethren is to establish and maintain institutions of learning to prepare men and women for the missionary task in a constantly changing world. The central thrust of the Seminary's effort is to propagate the missionary vision and produce committed servants.[39]

President Emeritus J. B. Toews offers a noteworthy commentary on the Seminary's position on mission:

> The Seminary's commitment to missions and evangelism expresses a conscious responsibility to share the redemptive provision of God through Jesus Christ. It takes seriously the words of Jesus, "As thou hast sent me into the world even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18), and embraces the statement of the Scriptures that "He died for all, that they that live, should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto him who died for them and rose again." The thrust of the gospel "to wit that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself . . . and has committed to us the word of reconciliation that we should also be reconcilers" is not considered an optional activity but rather central to the character and purpose of the church. The Seminary strives to rise above the mere theological and creedal implications of such understanding in an effort to make the mission of the church in evangelism and outreach to be part of the ongoing life

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[38] In all MB Biblical Seminary Catalogs from 1960-1968.

[39] MB Biblical Seminary Catalog, 1965-1966, p. 18.

> of the Seminary community, to be realized in the ministry of those who go into the work of the church at home and abroad.[40]

The Board of Trustees. This Board is composed of nine members, four from each national conference and one elected at-large by the Conference. For practical and legal purposes, the Board of Trustees consists of separate components for each country. The members of the Canadian conference constitute the Board of Stewardship, which has its own internal organization. Yet in matters relating to the entire Conference the two divisions make up one board. The Constitution describes both power and function of the Board in some detail and states that its purpose "shall be to administer for and on behalf of the Conference all property held in the name of the Conference and all property vested in the Board in trust for the benefit of the Conference." Within Canada that same responsibility is assumed by the Board of Stewardship.[41]

The Board of Stewardship renders invaluable services to the entire Conference, but particularly to the Board of Missions and Services, which has an operational budget that far exceeds the budget of any other single board or committee of the Conference.

This, then, is the structure which sustains the Mennonite Brethren mission momentum: The Conference with its central boards, including the Board of Reference and Counsel as the major spiritual motivator; the Board of the MB Biblical Seminary, giving primary missiological and theological direction for world mission; and the Board of Trustees, which seeks to maintain a sense of Christian stewardship and a balanced budget. The next sustaining force rests with the missionary people.

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[40] J. B. Toews, "Focusing the Vision," in The Seminary Story: Twenty Years of Education in Ministry 1955-1975, ed. A. J. Klassen (Fresno: Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, 1975), p. 24 (17-24).

[41] Constitution and ByLaws, 1981, pp. 28-29.

Missionary Personnel

In his report to the Convention in Vancouver in 1969, the newly appointed General Secretary of the Board of Missions and Services, Vernon Wiebe, boldly stated:

> This is a report about people. People on five continents. Some dress differently, act differently, speak differently, look differently [sic]. But they are all part of a united effort. We have included data about programs and finances, but these are secondary. Programs become obsolete. Finances fluctuate. But people are primary.[42]

After being in office for nearly a decade, the Secretary spoke in a similar tone. "People have always been the key factors in Christ's mission," he asserted. Just as the early church set apart and sent out its first missionaries, noted Wiebe, so does the church today select and commission people on the basis of spiritual gifts needed for services in the world.[43]

Unmatching Keys

Though noble and ideal, the above claims are tempered by the historical realities of Mennonite Brethren mission. The primacy of people is indeed important, both at the recruiting and sending end and the receiving and missionizing end. But between the two are still the programs and institutions, the structures and the finances needed to express the vision and action of people. The same is true with giftedness. While indispensable for missionary service, the Mennonite Brethren have never followed a simple pattern in the process of recruiting men and women on the basis of their giftedness alone.

There have been those who volunteered for missionary service, while others were invited to join the working force; there have been those who were drawn in by circumstances, while still others got involved because of unexplainable compulsions at work in their lives. Then there have also been those who were called, gifted, and committed; yet they

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[42] GCY, 1969, p. 50.

[43] GCY, 1978, p. 92.

were rejected by the mission agency and left to struggle on their own. Somehow there was sometimes no key to match the lock and thus the door refused to open. It seemed administratively sealed from within, causing independent programs to be devised and implemented. Such independent movements as the Congo Inland Mission, the China Mennonite Mission, the Kafumba Mission, and the Afrika Missionsverein, discussed earlier, are cases in point. Only after many trying years and painful tears did the door unlock, and only when the latch was released from within.

First Resolution on Personnel

When Abraham Friesen in Russia declared his call to mission and volunteered to go as missionary to India, the elders of the church rejoiced, saying that this was God's doing. They had prayed for missionaries, and God had answered. This was in 1885. Three years later the Friesens were sent out to India as the first MB missionaries, under sponsorship of the American Baptist Mission Union. At the 1896 Convention in Ebenfeld, Kansas, the American Mennonite Brethren had a similar experience. Heinrich Enns and Peter Wedel, two of their finest young men, had declared their readiness to be sent to Cameroon in Africa under the sponsorship of the Berlin Baptist Mission Society. The response of the conference delegation was mixed. On the one hand, there was gladness in the act of God's calling of missionaries from their own midst. On the other hand, there was sadness in the fact that these two men with their wives had to go with the Baptists because the Mennonite Brethren had no foreign mission field of their own. But that was about to change.

As I have pointed out in Chapter 10, the relationship with the Baptists became a test case of Christian brotherliness for the Mennonite Brethren. As a result, the 1896 Convention gave birth to the following resolution on mission personnel:

> Whenever a sister or a brother aspires to enter service for the Lord, he or she shall make known such desire to the elder of the church. The elder, in turn shall on

> behalf of that person make contact with the Committee for Foreign Mission. The Committee shall then approach the home church in order to gain clarity and direction about the person's aptness for missionary work.[44]

The significance of this resolution is fourfold. First, it was the first mission personnel policy statement formulated by the American Mennonite Brethren. It was occasioned by severe tensions existing between the Brethren and the Baptists. Second, the policy alerted potential missionary candidates to a channel of communication: they could relate their call to the elders of the church rather than to a mission society. Third, the statement expressed the seriousness of the Conference about its own commitment to mission work. Finally, the resolution served as a call--if not as a direct admonition--to Mennonite Brethren youths to maintain denominational loyalty: if and when the call to missionary service came to them, why not go with their own denomination rather than a different mission society?

Classification of Missionaries

The first two or three generations of Mennonite Brethren missionaries were called to only one type of missionary vocation: a long-term commitment. When men and women decided to go into mission work, they were committed to a life of Christian witness on a mission field often light years apart from their own traditions, family customs, and familiar cultures. But that single track of mission thinking came to crossroads after World War II and went in different directions. In keeping with the trends of the times, the Mennonite Brethren expanded their service programs. During the 1960s and 1970s they added a number of short-term mission opportunities to the former long-term category.

Christian Service Workers. At the 1972 Convention in Reedley, California, the Chairman of the Board of Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services reviewed the oldest short-term program, saying:

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[44] GCY, 1896, p. 18; cf. pp. 13-18.

> The Christian Service program, begun in 1960 at a General Conference session held in Reedley, continues to grow and expand. More service opportunities are becoming available and more young people are seeking short term church-related services. A major improvement in the program is the appointment of unit leaders, often home missions pastors and missionaries, in centers of major concentration of Christian Service workers. The appointment of these leaders has brought a closer cooperation between Christian Service and our mission work.
>
> Unit leaders attend the orientation sessions and become a vital part of the planning and development of a more meaningful service.
>
> Language orientation is now required for all overseas Christian Service workers (though most work in American schools) in order to relate better to our national church.
>
> At home the Christian Service program continues to seek close liaison with home mission boards. During this term the Christian Service program initiated and funded Bookrack Evangelism in many home mission locations.
>
> Overall a concerted effort to increase income and reduce costs is in progress so that earnings may be used to appoint young people who can give part or all of their services to our mission agencies without cost.[45]

In 1978 people working in this program were still assigned to domestic and overseas ministries and received an allowance of $50 a month. Because those engaged in gainful employment turned their income over to the Mission, most Christian Service assignments were self-supporting.[46] In the 1970s several other short-term programs were introduced.

The Good News Corps. "Rejoice!" exclaimed the General Secretary in 1972. "There are good days ahead. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Then he added in church growth language: "Bearing precious seed will end in a glad harvest." Because of its comprehensive nature and prescriptive value for the implementation of this particular program and the missionary serving in it, the initial statement merits to be quoted in some length:

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[45] GCY, 1972, pp. 24-25; cf. GCY, 1978, p. 93; GCY, 1981, p. 100.

[46] GCY, 1978, p. 93; GCY, 1981, p. 100.

> Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services is pleased to announce the formation of a Good News Corps of under-30 people who will be called and sent around the world as a primary strike force in believers-church-planting evangelism.
>
> The mission does not accept an easy road to victory for this strike force, but has the promise that there will be a harvest and that it will be a glad one.
>
> Recruitment. Mennonite Brethren churches in Canada and the United States are urged to pray out under-30 people in whom they recognize the gifts of evangelism. These people should be called and sent to serve for a minimum of two years after orientation and language study. Orientation will be eight weeks each summer. Language study, when it is required, will be from six to nine months. The first orientation will be held in July and August, 1973.
>
> Persons interested in this kind of ministry should share it with a leader in their church.
>
> Men and women, both married and single, will be sent.
>
> Responsibility. The corpsmen will be responsible to work in believers-church-planting evangelism in an area that the corpsmen choose. This will be at home or abroad. The corpsman's whole time will be devoted to evangelism. Corpsmen will be expected to stay in one place for the duration of the term because sowing is hard work, takes time, and demands concentrated attention. Corpsmen will be assigned in groups of four or more. They will be responsible to a group leader.
>
> Remuneration. Corpsmen will be remunerated on the Christian Service scale which is maintenance and $40 per month.
>
> Resources. The corpsman's church will be asked to invest $125 per month in the corpsman's ministry. The Board of Missions and Services will supply the other half of the cost.
>
> Respond. Church members are urged to pray and to search their congregations for under-30 people with the gifts of evangelism. The names of people that come to mind should be shared with the church leadership.
>
> Church leaders should write as soon as the church has chosen Corpsmen.[47]

By 1978 (to match Christian Service allowance) remuneration had been raised to $50, with half coming from the home churches of the corpsmen and the other half from the Board of Missions and Services. By the end of the sixth year of the program, a number of Good News Corps workers had been

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[47] GCY, 1972, p. 31.

reassigned as long-term missionaries upon completion of their first short-term service.

Vocational missionaries. These are often older men and women with years of professional experience who make themselves available for a variety of missionary services in close relationship with existing programs. Although they make their own arrangements and are self-supporting, they are not entirely independent; the Board assists in negotiating field assignments and the missionaries report to the Board about their work. In 1972 the General Secretary described nature and role of these missionaries this way:

> Led by the Spirit. The early church was scattered by persecutions. Today's church can be scattered by vocation. The opportunities of planting the church around the world are increasing as more and more Canadians and Americans obtain employment abroad. Many of these expatriates take these assignments for excitement and enrichment. Among them are sensitive Christians who feel the Spirit's leading and make themselves available to build the church in the new culture (often nearly wholly pagan) where they have opportunity to work.
>
> It is to these people that this paper is addressed.
>
> Confirmed by the Church. Share your leading to build the church abroad with the leaders of your church. Upon the church's confirmation of your desire to serve through your vocation, the Board of Missions and Services would help you find a place of work and witness.
>
> Appointed by the Board. Upon the recommendation of your home congregation the board is prepared to: offer guidance in a placement where you can be a witness; aid in orientation to prepare you for witnessing and service; include you for prayer support and encouragement in our reports to the churches.
>
> Integrated by the Field. Wherever possible tentmakers will be assigned to countries that already have Mennonite Brethren workers. Upon arrival you will be introduced to the worker family so that your ministry complements the missionary work already in progress.
>
> Tentmakers--vocational missionaries, to use a modern term--are needed now for assignment in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America. There are a variety of positions available. Your skills will be matched to available openings. We are ready to assist you in negotiating for one of these assignments.[48]

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[48] GCY, 1972, pp. 31-32.

The positive contributions of the Vocational Missionary is clearly reflected in a 1984 policy statement governing this work. Not only did the Board of Missions and Services speak favorably about this type of missionary, but also extended additional services in order to make travel and financial arrangements more pleasant.[49]

The vocational missionaries could well become key human resources in the 1980s and 1990s provided they are committed to long-term service.

Self-supporting missionaries. This is a relatively undefined category. A 1975 report describes them as "many people who have been in the Missions/Services program for a period of time. While employed by other agencies now," the record goes on to explain, "they continue working with the same objectives and where possible, fellowship with, and lend support to our work."[50] Neither a list of names nor any source of information about the people and their work is available.

Missionary assistants program. Simply referred to as MAP, this program is designed for young people of high school and Bible school age. It requires little or no experience and only minimally tested skills. What is required is willingness to serve in a cooperative spirit. The General Secretary has described the program in these terms:

> Usually this is a summer service but can be extended. MAPs pay their own transportation abroad (usually raised by their schools); Missions/Services pays board and room and the Christian service allowance. In Japan MAPs serve with Language Institute for Evangelism (LIFE) and teach English to Japanese through the Japanese Mennonite Brethren churches in Osaka. In Spain young people are active during the summer in camp work and literature distribution.[51]

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[49] Board of Missions and Services, Agenda and Minutes, April 1984, p. 15.

[50] GCY, 1975, p. 95.

[51] GCY, 1978, p. 93; GCY, 1981, p. 100.

The Board of Missions and Services cooperates closely with college and Bible institute administrations in recruitment and assists in assigning these young people to areas of service most beneficial to them.[52]

Summer Service Program. Although this is somewhat related to the Missionary Assistance Program, the Summer Service category developed as a result of different needs and circumstances. Such para-church organizations as Operation Mobilization, Teen Venture International, and Language Institute for Evangelism began to recruit large numbers of MB young people. This caused major concern to church and mission leaders throughout the Conference. Rather than resist recruitment by para-church agencies, the Mennonite Brethren entered a cooperative agreement with them by providing service opportunities for their own young people.

In his 1984 report to the Conference, the General Secretary spoke of "active participation in the recruitment of youth for cross-cultural ministries, and hopefully developing interest in long-term missionary work."[53]

Such cooperative effort on the part of the mission administration must be viewed as a positive move on two counts: (a) it manifests a spirit of evangelical ecumenicity, and (b) it gives young people an opportunity to express their desire for service in the context of Mennonite Brethren church mission rather than outside the church.

Fraternal visitors. These are people with special skills often called by the churches abroad for short-term services in evangelism and Bible teaching, or to provide medical, agricultural and other types of ministries. Their support usually comes from the Board of Missions and Services, and their assignment demands maturity, experience, and a high level of energy for maximum input during short periods of time.

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[52] GCY, 1975, p. 95.

[53] GCY, 1984, p. 40; GCY, 1981, p. 100.

The Handbook defines the relationships between the various types of short-term workers and other personnel serving with Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services thus:

> The short term programs of Mennonite Brethren Missions/ Services provide opportunities for committed Christians to express their love to God and to their fellowman. By ministering with Christ-like compassion through words and deeds, the Christian is an instrument of the church in proclaiming Christ to the world.[54]

The long-range benefits of the short-term programs may prove to be as significant for the recruits themselves as for the recipients of their services. For a few it may not mean much more than the fulfillment of a dream to travel and adventure; for the majority it is an opportunity to express their love to God and humankind in acts of Christian witness; for still others it provides a testing ground for decisions and commitments with regard to their future calling and vocation.

Long-term missionaries. This is the traditional category of mission personnel and until the 1960s the only type serving in MB mission work. The literature makes it very clear that the sending Conference has consistently viewed these people as very special. After all, they are the real "ambassadors for Jesus Christ";[55] they have a "divine call from the Lord"[56] which is acknowledged and affirmed by the home church; they are "sent out by the Holy Spirit and the Church. . . (Acts 13:1-4)"[57] for the sole

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[54] Handbook for Short Term Service (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Missions and Services, 1979), p. 1.

[55] Guiding Principles and Policies of Mennonite Brethren Church Missions, 2nd ed. (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Missions, 1961), p. 12.

[56] Guiding Principles and Policies of Mennonite Brethren Church Missions, 3rd ed. (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Missions, 1963), p. 23.

[57] Principles and Policies, 1961, p. 12; 1963; p. 18; GCY, 1981, p. 99; cf. Foreign Missions: Guiding Principles and Field Policies (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Foreign Missions, 1947), p. 10.

purpose of proclaiming "the grace and redemption of Jesus Christ."[58]

The importance of the missionaries in MB mission thinking is accented by the way they have been classified. In the various editions of Principles and Policies we find at least seven categories of long-term missionaries.

1. Appointees were those who had been formally accepted but not yet "dispatched to the field."

2. Those serving "on the mission field" were called active.

3. Furloughed missionaries were those who had "returned to the homeland after the completion of a term of service."

4. Persons who had come home for health or other reasons and stayed home longer than two years were classified as returned and no longer listed as missionaries.

5. Missionaries reaching the age of sixty-five or seventy years were described as retired. While in 1947 the Board granted "special consideration for additional service on the foreign field" when the missionary was in "exceptionally good health,"[59] by 1961 the retired category was enforced at sixty-five years of age.[60]

6. Employees made up a special class of workers appointed by the board. Although they worked side by side with the missionaries in spiritual, educational, boarding, hospital, literacy, building, economic or other services directly associated with the missionary effort of a field, they were not ordained missionaries.[61]

7. Finally, in 1947 there was also an honorary class, consisting of "missionaries who have died on the field or

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[58] GCY, 1981, p. 99; cf. Principles and Policies, 1961, p. 12; 1963, p. 23.

[59] Guiding Principles, 1947, p. 11.

[60] Principles and Policies, 1961, p. 20; 1963, p. 23.

[61] Principles and Policies, 1961, pp. 20-21; 1963, p. 23.

in the homeland, and because of their services are listed in memoriam."[62]

While the more recent development of the short-term workers cannot be dismissed as unimportant, it must be emphasized that the long-term missionaries have been and continue to be the dominant sustaining force in the total mission program and the backbone of outreach in the world. "Trained, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, the missionaries, ordained for the task of preaching the Gospel, give continuity and stability to the work."[63] In 1977 the Board of Missions and Services adopted the following statement:

> We feel that the major burden of cross-cultural work rests on those who have longer commitments to our mission programs, and who are willing to invest the time, energy and self necessary to identify with the people and to build a communication bridge across cultural differences.[64]

The actualization of the call to long-term missionary service within the context of the Conference has always happened through the Board of Missions and Services or its equivalent. The Board has always appointed the missionary and been responsible for his/her full financial support. In more recent years, such appointment has been "at the invitation of the national church," making the security of the missionary rather tenuous and uncertain in that both appointment and invitation must be renewed each time the missionary returns home for furlough.[65]

Qualifications for Candidates

It is interesting to note that the Mennonite Brethren have spelled out the qualifications for workers entering foreign mission assignments much more clearly than for workers assigned to the American continent. Thus the observations

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[62] Building Principles, 1947, p. 11.

[63] GCY, 1975, p. 94.

[64] Principles and Policies, 1977, p. 17.

[65] GCY, 1981, p. 99.

here pertain primarily to foreign missionaries, and of those primarily to the long-term missionaries.

General qualifications. The early editions of the Constitution spelled out some general requirements which had to be met by all men and women desiring to be accepted and commissioned as missionaries under the auspices of the Mennonite Brethren mission: (a) They must be members of the Mennonite Brethren church; (b) they must have proven themselves in their Christian faith and walk; (c) they must receive a recommendation from their home church for missionary service; (d) they must be in good physical health; (e) they must have adequate academic preparation in German and English; and (f) they must have the confidence of the Conference. This last requirement is further qualified by saying,

> In order to enjoy confidence by the Conference it is necessary that such workers have served the Conference successfully for at least three years. In the event, however, where they already earned such confidence and where the need for workers is urgent, they may be sent out sooner.

The wording of the 1909 Constitution is slightly more relaxed in that it does not demand, but makes it desirable, that missionaries serve their home constituency for three years prior to a field assignment.[66]

The Krimmer Mennonites laid down similar requirements for the Missionszögline. In their 1917 Charter governing missionary assignments, the Krimmer Brethren stated:

> 1. A missionary is a sent one. The Lord is the sender through the church. A brother or sister considering to go into mission should be called by the Lord.
> 2. The Lord calls in different ways, illustrated in the Word of God by the calling of the prophets and apostles. Yet the various calls have common characteristics. The Lord calls only those who believe in him. They experience inwardly a preparation of their hearts for the work of the Lord. In the process of their inner preparation the voice of God says to them, "Follow me." The persons called reach the indubitable

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[66] Statuten, 1901, pp. 10-11; Konstitution, 1909, pp. 9-10; Constitution, 1936, p. 22.

> conclusion: The Lord wants me in his work. Those who are thus called should have a good reputation in their church as well as in the world. They should also demonstrate willingness to work for the salvation of souls and get a letter of recommendation from their home church.[67]

In 1942, Executive Secretary H. W. Lohrenz presented to the Board of Foreign Missions a document entitled, "Principles for the Extension of Mission Work." In this document Lohrenz underscored the importance of the qualifications laid down earlier by the Constitutions. He had studied the requirements set forth by other mission societies and formulated his own conclusions to "serve as a guide even when they cannot be applied as an ironclad rule." Lohrenz also stated that the age limits for missionaries be set between twenty-four and thirty as most appropriate for the acquisition of a new language. The entire document was adopted by the Board at its sessions in Hillsboro, September 14-15, 1942.[68]

Specific qualifications. When the Board of Foreign Missions published its first edition of Guiding Principles and Field Policies in 1947, it repeated with only minor alterations and some elaborations on certain points the personal qualifications outlined in the Lohrenz document. In addition, however, the Board set forth "the spiritual standards of the workers," focusing specifically on their doctrinal position and the call of God. "All workers and candidates serving at home or abroad under the Board of Foreign Missions of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America," said the policy statement, "shall give clear evidence and wholeheartedly subscribe to the Confession of Faith of the Mennonite Brethren Church." The importance attached to this statement is expressed in near absolute terms:

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[67] Konstitution der Krimmer Mennoniten Brüder Gemeinde von Nord Amerika nebst Freibrief, 1927 reprint of the 1917 edition (no p. and p., 1927), p. 19.

[68] H. W. Lohrenz, Principles for the Extension of Mission Work, Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, 1942, pp. 90-92.

> Should any worker in the course of his service as a missionary of the Mennonite Brethren Church change his views on some of the basic cardinal points of faith and practice, he must inform the Board of Missions and be prepared to resign his connection as a missionary of the Mennonite Brethren Church if requested to do so.[69]

The 1961 and 1963 policy statements underscore the confessional position, elaborate on the question of the missionary call, and add two paragraphs on relationships.

Since I will deal with the question of relationships in Chapter 12, a few observations on the call will suffice here.

> This is of highest importance, and every candidate should be clear on this point. It is a subjective qualification of which the missionary alone can speak with certainty. But one needs to remember that this subjective call will be corroborated by qualities listed below. When the Holy Spirit called for the separation of Barnabas and Saul, the call found a ready response by their associates and the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3).[70]

The call of God in the life of a missionary has always been high on the qualification list of Evangelicals. "Missionaries are not superpeople," writes Marjory Foyle. "They are flesh and blood like everyone else. But," she adds, "there is one thing that sets them apart from other people: God has called them to missionary service." The conviction that God does, indeed, call people, and that the call should be carefully respected, examined, and nurtured, has always been an integral part of Mennonite Brethren mission thinking.[71]

Updating demands. The latest edition of Mission Principles and Policies (1977) assumes doctrinal loyalty and the missionary call without making explicit reference to the qualifications that were evidently very significant to the

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[69] Guiding Principles, 1947, p. 8; cf. pp. 8-11.

[70] Principles and Policies, 1963, p. 13; cf. Principles and Policies, 1961, pp. 12-13; Guiding Principles, 1947, p. 10.

[71] Marjory Foyle, "How to Choose the Right Missionary," Evangelical Missions Quarterly 22 (April 1986), 196; cf. G. W. Peters, "The Call of God," Bibliotheca Sacra 120 (1963), 322-333.

mission leaders from the 1930s through the 1960s. Instead, this new document bases missionary qualifications on five theological positions, each of which is crucial in molding the quality of MB mission.[72] The central focus is on character, training and recruitment of missionary personnel.

First, since all ministries are spiritual ministries and contribute to the life of the church as a whole, the Conference expects all missionaries to know and live according to the Scriptures. Therefore, Bible training and its application to a Christian lifestyle rank high on the list of qualifications.

Second, since all missionary ministries assume the crossing of cultural frontiers, the Conference recognizes the need for mission personnel to be well trained in cross-cultural communications and relationships. To meet this specific qualification, candidates should have training in biblical-exegetical, communicative, cultural, ministerial, and relational skills. The Board of Missions and Services seeks to provide such training for all its missionaries.

Finally, the focus is on recruitment of personnel with expertise and experience. "In view of the flood of nationalism, and in view of the spiritual growth of new churches," asserts Paul Hiebert, "we are aware of the need to recruit personnel with experience and with a high degree of competence in specific ministries."[73]

Concluding observations. It has become evident by now that qualifications for missionary candidates in Mennonite Brethren mission have been determined as much by the philosophy of missionary service held by the administrator in charge as by any other criteria. Whereas the policy statements of the 1940s through the 1960s place much emphasis on the call, the focus of the 1970s is sharp on charisma and

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[72] Paul G. Hiebert, Mission Principles and Policies of the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Missions and Services, 1977), p. 7.

[73] Hiebert, Principles, pp. 16-17.

giftedness. This is captured in a summary statement made by the General Secretary at the 1978 Convention: "The principal qualifications for all workers with Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services are proven gifts which have been affirmed by the church."[74]

In still more recent years, the new General Secretary has added another dimension which earlier administrators either assumed as a given or were not so concerned about, namely "experience in soul-winning." At the October 1984 sessions, the Administrative Secretariat presented a motion to the Board of Missions and Services, that all candidates be asked to relate their "experience in leading a person to the Lord." The resolution goes on to state that "if this is not part of their experience, opportunity and teaching should be provided." It was decided to include a question in the application form with regard to soul winning.[75]

Recruitment of Personnel

At the 1966 Convention in Corn, Oklahoma, the Conference adopted a declaration on missions entitled, "Statement of Missions--Forward Thrust." The paragraph on "Enlistment for Missions" is apropos at this point:

> Missionary recruits are becoming fewer these days. Why? Varying and divergent answers may be suggested. The fact, however, remains, that missionary candidates come from our churches and the Christian homes. It is here where we must look for missionary recruits. We believe that God is still extending His special call to young men and women for missions and evangelism and that our churches, schools and homes of our constituency remain the major force in nurturing the missionary call. Although we may ascribe the affluency [sic] of our society as compounding the problem of missionary recruitment--and we need to caution ourselves against our being determined by a materialistic attitude and way of life, we believe that the youth of our churches, with the finest education and preparation they can secure today, will respond to the special call to missions and evangelism once they hear and recognize it. We would

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[74] GCY, 1978, p. 92.

[75] Board of Missions and Services, Agenda and Minutes, October 1984, p. 8.

> therefore call upon our churches to join in prayerful supplication to the "Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:38).[76]

This statement most aptly summarizes the perennial issues related to missionary recruitment.

Shortage of workers. The document says that workers "are becoming fewer these days." This sentiment has been repeated many times by missionaries and mission leaders alike. As early as 1907 a missionary challenged the young people to become willing to "show their love to the Lord and the poor heathen in India by entering foreign missionary service."[77] Nearly seventy years later General Secretary Wiebe expanded that challenge by saying: "Men [and women] are needed to found new churches or to help the older churches found new churches. Young and old--both short term and long term--are needed."[78] Similar appeals have been made at other times. In 1948 the Executive Secretary and Treasurer A. E. Janzen mentioned India, South China, Africa, and Colombia as fields with "very challenging problems," because they all "need more workers."[79] At the Mission Centennial in Reedley in 1984, the General Secretary came before the delegates and projected a need for 100 new missionaries for the next five years.[80] Recruitment efforts are now under way to reach that goal.

Supply line of recruits. The second issue of the 1966 declaration with regard to enlistment of workers has to do with the supply line. Mennonite Brethren recruiters have never traversed the globe--as many agencies do--and searched for missionary candidates outside of their own constituency.

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[76] GCY, 1966, p. 103.

[77] GCY, 1907, p. 30.

[78] GCY, 1975, p. 62.

[79] GCY, 1948, pp. 13-14.

[80] GCY, 1984, p. 39; cf. "The Gospel is Growing: Celebrating 100 Years of Mennonite Brethren Missions," The Christian Leader, August 21, 1984, Insert, p. 31-B.

"Missionary candidates come from . . . our churches, schools and homes of our constituency," declares the statement. Therefore, these institutions "must be elevated to a place where they become an authentic nurturing agency of missions in the program of God." This burden "places upon us all a greater involvement in missionary education in our churches and in our homes."[81]

Such a fundamental and indeed biblical philosophy of recruitment merits an additional comment or two. On the one hand it speaks well for the Mennonite Brethren, who are traditionally known for their godly home life and biblical church view. That is why their families, churches, and schools have provided the kind of social, educational, and religious atmosphere where the missionary call could be nurtured and where mission thinking was fostered. For one hundred years these institutions have been the source of supply of the missionary force and thereby sustained the denominational missionary programs.

On the other hand, such a constrained base of recruitment has at least three negative consequences. It limits those in charge of recruitment to stay within the Mennonite Brethren constituency. Furthermore, it can easily promote a spirit of exclusivism--even narrowness--in mission operation. However, the most serious consequence of such restricted recruiting base is exclusion of those candidates who would like to serve with and under MB Missions and Services, but are rejected because they have not yet formally joined the MB Church, even when such potential candidates are at heart and in theology more "MB" than some MB missionaries in active service.[82]

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[81] GCY, 1966, pp. 103-104, emphasis added.

[82] Because of its sensitive nature, neither details nor names can be given here. Suffice it to say that within the last four years at least five such potential candidates have been rejected on that basis.

The problem of affluence. The statement expresses concern about affluence and materialistic attitudes. Mission leaders are beginning to question whether Mennonite Brethren are still willing to offer their "bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God" (Romans 12:1). They realize that the service of international and crosscultural witness is a demanding affair. Raymond Lull (1232-1316) put it well when he said, "Missionaries will convert the world through their preaching, but also by the shedding of tears and blood as well as through great affliction and through a bitter death."[83]

This has also been the conviction of Mennonite Brethren missionaries throughout their history. The "materialistic attitude" alluded to in the declaration is symptomatic of an erosion of values and priorities within Mennonite Brethren constituencies affecting recruitment in no small measure. In fact, it may be one of the major causes why the MB missionary force has steadily decreased since the 1960s. Whereas the Board of Missions in 1965 reported 224 men and women missionaries under its support, in 1984 the Board of Missions and Services had only 179 on its list, of whom forty-two were on a short-term assignment.[84] At the same time the membership of the sending churches in Canada and the United States had increased from 29,888 in 1965 to a total of 40,000 in 1984.[85]

Young men and women. Another concern had to do with service opportunities for youths. As I have noted earlier, the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations created the Christian Service Program in 1960 to meet this need. At the Convention in Winnipeg three years later, the chairman of that Board presented a challenging report under the title,

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[83] Tim Dowly, ed., Handbuch: Die Geschichte des Christentums (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1979), p. 344.

[84] GCY, 1966, p. 93; GCY, 1984, p. 45.

[85] GCY, 1966, p. 138; GCY, 1984, p. 146.

"Relief and Service in the Eleventh Hour," based on Jesus's Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16).[86]

By 1963 the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations had appointed Dwight Wiebe as full-time secretary and sent out thirty-eight men and women to serve on four continents. The new secretary explained to the Convention:

> The Christian Service Program was organized to offer an 11th hour opportunity for our Conference young people to give of their time and talents in the service of Christ. We must provide channels of positive witnessing against materialism and militarism. One of the greatest challenges of our day is to utilize the dedication and skills of our youth in the building of the kingdom of God. . . .
>
> Young people of the Conference have been enthusiastic about the program, realizing that it offers them an avenue of positive Christian witness. Applications have come in faster than we were able to place in the growing program. . . .
>
> Christian Service has cooperated with other Conference boards such as Education, Home Missions, and Foreign Missions in placing young people in direct Conference service.[87]

But with the merger of the two Boards in 1966 to form the Board of Missions and Services, one senses a spirit of uneasiness on the part of mission leaders about integrating the service program into the mission program. This uneasiness surfaced in a document issued at the 1966 Convention in Corn. What if the merger should undermine the "urgency and relevancy of evangelism" stressed at the World Congress in Berlin? And what if it should weaken our "faithfulness to God . . . in the proclamation of the Gospel?" Therefore, the statement went on to declare that "as a Mennonite Brethren brotherhood we re-affirm our understanding of the missionary mandate as being a ministry to the whole man with the primary purpose of preaching the Gospel, to make disciples, to baptize them, to gather them into churches, and to lead them on in the knowledge of Christ."[88] In order to

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[86] GCY, 1963, pp. 99-100.

[87] GCY, 1963, p. 102.

[88] GCY, 1966, p. 104.

insure both faithfulness to this conviction and a commitment to provide service opportunities for MB young people, the Christian Service Program has become divided into two compartments. The international component is under the administration of the Board of Missions and Services, whereas the domestic component is assigned to the Board of Evangelism and Christian Service of the United States Area Conference.[89]

In recent years, service opportunities for young people have been considerably expanded, and recruitment efforts by Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services have been intensified. A special secretariat position has been created to give top priority to the task of recruiting youths and young adults to mission ministries. The General Secretary stated before the Convention in 1984:

> MBM/S is seeking to tap an important strata of young men and women for ministries abroad. In particular, we want to challenge students in Bible colleges, Bible schools, Christian arts colleges and universities. In addition to that, we have begun active participation in the recruitment of youth for summer programs, giving early experience in cross-cultural ministries, and hopefully developing interest in long-term missionary work. . . . The best, the most dedicated among them are sought to enlist in the ranks of the missionary force.[90]

One more comment is imperative at this point. One can only respect and endorse the evident concern of the Mennonite Brethren to sustain their commitment to evangelism and church planting, even within the Christian Service Program designed especially for youth. Yet one must ask, if that focus is just as valid for domestic service in the United States as it is for assignments in foreign countries, why then the division of the program into two components? Furthermore, is there not a danger in expending so much

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[89] Cf. GCY, 1984, p. 40; Constitution of the United States Confernce of the Mennonite Brethren Churches (Fresno: United States Conference, 1977), pp. 8-9.

[90] GCY, 1984, p. 40; cf. "The Gospel Is Growing," p. 30-B.

effort in youth recruitment? Has it not repeatedly been stated that the long-term missionaries are the real sustaining backbone of the missionary force, lending longevity and continuity to the entire mission enterprise? While there is lingering hope and certainly a potential that "early experience in cross-cultural ministries" will develop into "interest in long-term missionary work," there is also the risk of paying a high price for mere hope. It would seem advisable to commit equal--if not more--time and energy to recruiting long-term personnel as to enlisting short-term youth.

A call to prayer. The 1966 statement extends a special call to the churches "to join in prayerful supplication to the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His Harvest (Matthew 9:38)." This resounding appeal is always connected to Mennonite Brethren Mission recruitment. Reinforcement of the missionary working force is urgently needed, says a report of 1943. Therefore, "we wish to place this need as a special object of prayer upon our churches."[91] Missionaries J. N. C. and Anna Hiebert wrote from India to the churches in America, encouraging "all to pray that the Lord of the great harvest may call and prepare such [needed young] workers now, as well as protect all older workers who may be able to return soon." Realizing the need for more missionaries, Executive-Secretary Lohrenz affirmingly responded, "we shall continue to pray the Lord of the harvest that He send forth more laborers."[92]

In view of the evident importance given to recruitment in Mennonite Brethren mission, it is surprising that the Board of Missions and Services has no specific statement of principles, method and strategy on how recruitment can be most effectively carried out in the constituency. There are clear qualifications for the potential candidates and

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[91] GCY, 1943, p. 11.

[92] GCY, 1943, pp. 18, 21.

procedural guidelines for the Personnel Commission on how to select the best from the good, but there are no principles spelled out to assist recruiters at the grassroots level in their task of recruitment. That is disappointing.

The Secretary for Personnel in consultation with the Personnel Commission might do well to assume responsibility in this area, providing up-to-date information on the kind of people needed and on how they might most effectively be discovered and discerned within the local congregation. The kind of missionaries needed at a given time for a certain place is a matter of internal concern of the Secretariat and can easily be provided. But the principle of selecting the suitable candidate to match the given need may require help from outside sources. This is not to suggest that the call of God is unimportant or should be bypassed. On the contrary, the call can be affirmed by discernment within the local fellowship in order to prevent potential rejection at the higher level of the selection process--a rejection which could lead to disappointment and irreparable stress.[93]

Support and Length of Terms

As I will show in Chapter 12, such mission endeavors as the Kafumba Mission, loosely related to the Congo Inland Mission, the Bololo field under the Afrika Missionsverein, and Bartel's efforts under the China Mennonite Mission Society were independent ventures, though largely staffed and financed by Mennonite Brethren and Krimmer Mennonite Brethren churches. The policies on support and term of service dealt with here do not apply to missionaries serving under these private enterprises, but only to those assigned as Mennonite Brethren Conference workers. All long-term missionaries appointed by the official Mennonite Brethren mission agency are treated as Conference employees whose

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[93] Every pastor and mission leader in local churches would benefit from reading Marjory Fayle's article on "How to Choose the Right Missionary," Evangelical Missions Quarterly 22 (April 1986), 196-204.

terms of service and compensation for service is defined by guiding principles and policies mutually acceptable by both parties, the mission agency as the employer and the missionary as the employed.

Initially, missionary salaries were not determined by the country in which they served, but by marital status and gender of persons involved.[94] But that soon changed. The Constitution states a policy in more general terms:

> The annual salaries of the missionaries, both for the time of active service and that spent at home on furlough, are stipulated by the Conference with due consideration of conditions as they exist at home and on the fields. But whenever special cases occur or hard times arise, it shall be the right and duty of the Board of Foreign Missions to make such provisions that the work can be carried on till the next convention of the Conference.[95]

The current policy to determine a missionary's financial support begins with a base salary which is reviewed annually. To this is added a yearly service increment for up to twenty years of full-time service. Then there is also an equalization policy which relies on the services provided by the "Organization Resources Counselors" to determine the salary amount received in different countries. Thus while the number of dollars the missionary receives may fluctuate due to the given rate of exchange in the host country, the actual buying power remains stable.[96] The Conference has also through respective boards assisted missionaries with children by making special allowances for their support until they reach the age of eighteen years. Similar support is given to retired missionaries and those "who have spent their whole strength in mission service." While the home congregations of the missionaries are encouraged to provide help as needed,

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[94] Statuten, 1901, p. 11; Konstitution, 1909, p. 10, GCY, 1899, p. 16; 1900, p. 33; 1907, p. 22; 1905, pp. 17, 50; 1908, pp. 12-13.

[95] Constitution, 1936, p. 28.

[96] Handbook for Long Term Service, 1979, p. 6; Handbook for Service (Hillsboro, KS and Winnipeg: Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services, 1982), pp. 5-6.

"the Conference is willing to do in every case what Christian love demands."[97]

The term of service in Mennonite Brethren mission has remained consistently long. Since the beginning of foreign mission work in 1898 until more than a decade past World War II, missionaries served seven or eight years before they were entitled to a Erholungsreise or a furlough, usually twelve to eighteen months. Once a missionary had served two or more terms, furlough time could be a little longer, but should not exceed a period of three years.[98] In 1957 the Board of Foreign Missions recommended to the Conference that the normal length of a term of service on the foreign field be reduced from seven to six years.[99] In 1963, although six years was still considered a full term of service, the Board of Missions formulated a new policy, making both term of service and period of furlough more relaxed and flexible.[100] The rationale given for more frequent but shorter furloughs was threefold: (a) the need for continuity of ministry without prolonged interruption by furloughs; (b) the favorable circumstances on the field which no longer made separation of parents from children mandatory for educational circumstances; and (c) the practical means of transportation allowing missionaries to return home in less than twenty-four hours.[101]

The furlough of missionaries has always been closely guarded, so that it would benefit both the supporting Conference and the missionaries involved, tilting more in favor of the latter. The 1963 Policies state that "furloughs are granted to missionaries" for the following purposes:

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97 Constitution, 1936, pp. 28-29.

98 Konstitution, 1909, p. 10; Constitution, 1936, p. 28; cf. GCY, 1957, p. 41.

99 GCY, 1957, p. 41.

101 Principles and Policies, 1963, p. 24; cf. pp. 38-39; Constitution, 1963, pp. 118-119.

101 GCY, 1963, pp. 118-119.

a. To benefit them by physical, social, educational and spiritual refreshing in the homeland;
b. For the renewal of relationships with friends, relatives and churches;
c. For the social, moral and cultural orientation of their children;
d. For the establishment of the children in a normal family, community and church life; and
e. For deputation service in the churches.[102]

The present policy statement regulating terms of service and furloughs is most revealing of the tremendous transition that has taken place in mission thinking since 1898 to 1984. A recent Handbook spells it out clearly:

> The length of a term is set upon consultation with the home office, the missionary leadership, and the national church leadership. The following are standard:
>
> 22 months service - 2 months furlough
> 32 months service - 4 months furlough
> 42 months service - 6 months furlough
> 60 months service - 12 months furlough
>
> The longer terms and furloughs are recommended because they are advantageous for deputation and for the worker's adjustment.[103]

One concluding comment is imperative, lest the thinking of the early Mennonite Brethren fathers regarding missionary furloughs is misrepresented. There are several instances involving both married and single persons who were allowed to come home before conditions on the field became too difficult for them.[104] This speaks of Christian compassion and empathy on the part of mission executives for the pioneer missionaries: The welfare of the workers was more important to them than their own policies.

A Missionary Inventory

As impressive and complete as the archival materials on Mennonite Brethren mission may appear to be, the researcher still has to contend with gaps and loopholes. A case in

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[102] Principles and Policies, 1963, p. 37.

[103] Handbook for Long Term Service, 1979, p. 5; cf. updated edition, 1984, p. 5.

[104] GCY, 1908, pp. 25-26; 1912, pp. 10-11.

point is lack of hard data on those men and women who were actually commissioned and supported by either the Mennonite Brethren or the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference both in Russia and America. No absolute statistics are available and no serious research is extant on the subject. Yet to speak of mission personnel only in qualitative terms as I have done so far, without at least some attempt to show the quantitative aspect as well, is hardly justified. Therefore, what I am doing here is just that: an attempt to address the question of the missionary force in quantitative terms. Although the data are based on the records found in the General Conference Yearbooks,[105] Missionary Albums,[106] and Workers Directories,[107] and should be fairly reliable, they are presented here without any claim to apostolic finality. It should be noted that the figures prior to 1960 include only long-term missionaries, whereas after that year all short-term personnel such as Christian Service workers are included in the numbers.

Counting the numbers. The data (Table 6) demand a few comments. First, the numbers given in the table are based on missionary names listed in the 1985 updated "Historical Directory."[108] These figures are usually on the conservative

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[105] See Chapter 8, footnote #22 for the significance of the Yearbooks.

[106] Missionary Album (Hillsboro, KS: The Board of Foreign Missions, Mennonite Brethren Conference, 1951); Missionary Album 1889-1963: Mennonite Brethren and Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conferences (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Missions, 1963); N. N. Hiebert, Missions-Album aus der Mission der Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde von Nord America (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, [1914]).

[107] Mennonite Brethren Workers Directory 1976 (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services, 1976); Overseas Worker Directory 1979 (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services, 1979); Worker Directory 1984; "Historical Directory of Overseas Missionaries and Administration 1889-1984," Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services, Agenda and Minutes, May 1985, Exhibit 16.

[108] See this chapter, footnote #107 for complete reference.

Table 6

Missionary Force Inventory

	Afghanistan	Aruba	Austria	Aust/Germany	Bangladesh	Botswana	Brazil	Cameroon	China	Colombia	Ecuador	Ethiopia	Germany	Ghana	India	Indonesia	Japan	Liberia	Mexico	Nepal	Nigeria	Pakistan	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	Sierra Leone	S. Rhodesia	Spain	U.S.A.	Uruguay	U.S.S.R.	Venezuela	West Irian	Zaire	Yearbook Totals
1889															2																				
1890															2																				
1891															2																				
1892															2																				
1893															2																				
1894															2														2						
1895															2														2						
1896								4							2														2						
1897								4							2														2						
1898								1							6														2						
1899															11														2						
1900															11														4						
1901									2						11														6						
1902									2						11														6						
1903									2						11														8						
1904									2						19														8						
1905									2						17				2										8						
1906									2						17				2										8						
1907									2						17				2										8						
1908									2						20				2										6						
1909									2						18				2										4						
1912									8						18				2		1								6					2	
1915								1	10						18				2		2								4					2	

Table 6 (continued)

	Afghanistan	Aruba	Austria	Aust/Germany	Bangladesh	Botswana	Brazil	Cameroon	China	Colombia	Ecuador	Ethiopia	Germany	Ghana	India	Indonesia	Japan	Liberia	Mexico	Nepal	Nigeria	Pakistan	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	Sierra Leone	S. Rhodesia	Spain	U.S.A.	Uruguay	U.S.S.R.	Venezuela	West Irian	Zaire	Yearbook Totals
1918								1	13						17						2								5						
1921								1	26						18														6					2	
1924									24						18														4					2	
1927									20						23														6					2	
1930									15						26														5					3	
1933									12						26														5					9	
1936									15						30														5					10	
1939									17						29									2					7					13	
1942									6						24														12					10	
1945									5	3					19						1				2				11					11	50
1948							2		17	15					25				2		1			10	2				11					27	118
1951		1		2			4		7	18		1			39		5		5		1			6	2				14			2		32	151
1954		1	4	2			5			20	2	1	3		42		12		7		4			23	4		4		13			2		62	218
1957		1	2	4			10			21	5	1	4		38		12		10		5			15	6		6		12	2		2		66	220
1960		1	4	7			15			18	5	2	6		35		10		5		5			10	8		4		3	2		2		60	256
1963			4	2			24			18	4	2	10		36		18		13		5			14	6				3	2		1	2	44	242
1966			4	6			23			21	5	1	10		31		16		11	2	5		2	15	7				7	2		1	2	57	224
1969	2		4	4			20			24	7	1	12		21		17		5	2	2			12	5				3	2		1		66	221
1972	2		6	2			13			8	5	1	10	2	14		11		5	2	2			5	4				4	4				46	279
1975	2		10		2		12			12	6	3	12	2	5	4	11	1	8	2	1		2	6	2				5	4	2			29	249
1978	2		8		1	4	12			20	5		8		5	4	15	1	8	2	1		5	3	4			4	4	6	2			28	223
1981	2		6		1	4	15			10	5		14		7	2	13		8	2	1		3	2	2			7	4	6	1			25	229
1984	2		4		1	2	6			5	3		2		6	2	9		2			2	1	2	4			5	2	6				17	179

side compared to those given in the Yearbooks. Therefore, I have added a column on the far right of the page designated as "Yearbook Totals." This gives the actual number of missionaries under assignment for the given year, beginning in 1945.

Second, the figures do not say that all missionaries represented actually served under the MB and KMB Conferences. What they do say is (a) that the missionaries were members in one of the conference churches; (b) that they received their support from the home Conference; and (c) that the supporting conference considered them as their own. The MB missionaries from Russia, for instance, served under the American Baptist Mission Union in India. Yet the Mennonite Brethren assumed material and spiritual responsibility for them until World War I made such relationship impossible.

Third, the Mennonite Brethren currently serve in twenty-seven countries--including the United States and Canada--but are engaged in direct evangelism and church planting in only fifteen of them. The reason for listing thirty-six countries in the table calls for an explanation: (a) Prior to the merger of the KMB and MB Conferences in 1960, the KMBs sponsored a number of missionaries under para-church missions. Some of these relationships (e.g., Nepal and Nigeria) are still maintained. (b) The Mennonite Brethren also cooperate with other service agencies and have missionaries for special ministries in places like Botswana, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, and Afghanistan. (c) Angola and Portugal were accepted as new countries in 1984, but no missionaries have been sent there as yet. The MB Church in Angola has contact with the MB Churches in Brazil and Zaire.

Fourth, the years listed in the table coincide with the years in which the General Conference has historically convented for the business sessions. As noted earlier, the Brethren held their conventions annually, 1885-1909; and triannually thereafter, 1912-1984.

Finally, the golden age of MB mission (1945-1966) is not adequately reflected in the table. In 1945 there were

only fifty missionaries. The following year there were 102, an increase of more than 100 percent in one year,[109] which the table does not show.

Telling a tale with numbers. In the center of the Mission Memorial Court of the Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California, stands a triangular brick monument about six feet tall. On two bronze plates are inscribed the names of sixty-eight Mennonite Brethren missionaries; a third plate carries the following epitaph as a tribute to them:

> These did not hold their life of any account as dear unto themselves, so that they may accomplish their course and ministry which they received from the Lord Jesus.[110]

Those sixty-eight missionaries whose names appear on the monument make up only about 12 percent of the total missionary force of approximately 837 persons who at some point between 1889 and 1984 have been associated with the MB or KMB mission program.

Those figures tell a noteworthy tale. According to the data available, 624 of the 837 missionaries have spent a combined total of 7,949 years of service time. That averages out to nearly thirteen (12.75) years of missionary service for each person. Graphically it looks like this:

Years Served:	2-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50
No. of People:	170	167	78	51	49	41	32	14	5	5

The record has it that Aaron A. Janzen served the Lord in pioneering faith and persevering faithfulness, 1912-1956; Anna Goertzen, 1938-1979; Mary C. Wall in India, 1915-1957; D. F. Bergthold, 1904-1946; Anna Sudermann Bergthold, 1898-1946; Anna and Joe Gomez in Oklahoma, 1911-1958; Nellie Bartel in China, 1901-1946; and Henry C. Bartel, 1901-1951.

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[109] GCY, 1963, p. 62.

[110] For more detail see Hans Kasdorf, It's Sunrise in World Mission: A Vision Statement from the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (Fresno: Biblical Seminary, 1984), pp. 31-32.

This makes Bartel's missionary tenure of fifty years the longest one on KMB/MB records.

These statistics are more than cold numbers. They represent people--their call, their commitment, and their commission to years of service in the world of mission. These numbers challenge the present generation of Mennonite Brethren not only to salute and admire the forbears, but also to consider the result of their conduct and to imitate their faith as witnesses to the world.

Monetary Resources

The need to manage available mission funds gave rise to the Mennonite Brethren foreign mission program in 1885. After ninety years of experience in giving to the foreign mission treasury in order that the gospel could be proclaimed and the church built, the order was reversed: there was need for money to sustain the program. "Money is needed," stated the General Secretary at the 1975 Convention in Winnipeg--money to cover the cost of the mission program involving men and women and the founding of new churches. Then he added, "During the past triennium the North American churches have given liberally to extend the family of God. This has made it possible to call more men [and women] to work in its behalf."[111]

But how and from whom do Mennonite Brethren collect money to finance their mission enterprise for which the requirements have increased from $525.58 in the mission treasury in 1885 to an operating budget of $5,313,079 in 1984?[112] Several sources have remained relatively constant through the years.

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[111] GCY, 1975, p. 62.

[112] See GCY, 1885, p. 9; Board of Missions/Services, item, "Budget," Report and Recommendations and Minutes, April 23-25, 1984. The proposed budget for 1984/85 fiscal year is $5,342,379, GCY, 1984, p. 68.

The Mission Endowment Fund

Although not the oldest, it has been the most reliable source of income through the years. At the time of legal incorporation, the Brethren were required to present a statement of financial resources to the Charter Board of the State of Kansas. Thus secular law gave rise to the idea of establishing a financial base to sustain spiritual work. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees stated reflectively in 1954:

> In 1898 our brethren received a definite word from the Lord to inaugurate an independent mission work in the heathen countries. The home government informed itself about the financial backing. Their desire was to learn whether it was to be a permanent organization or just a passing fancy. By this inquiry the brethren were led to found a mission fund as financial support.[113]

In order to involve the entire Mennonite Brethren constituency (including Russia), the Komitee für Äußere Mission of 1900 combined explanation, appeal, and guidelines in a published challenge, "To the Churches in North America and Elsewhere." First, they declared that the Lord had called them into mission work, that he had provided both field and workers, and that it was now the duty of the Conference to respond. Second, they searched and asked for directions: "Lord, what is it that you want from us? How do you want us to begin, organize and sustain the work?" Third, they felt that it was now their turn to take action. "It is imperative," they said, "that we now establish a mission fund which will serve as security and give testimony to the fact that we take serious the things of the Lord which shall not be defeated even when put to the test by Satan himself." Fourth, they called on all church members to pray earnestly about the matter and then "allow the Lord to tell every brother and every sister the sum of money each should pledge in order that the Lord be praised in this matter." Finally, they set

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[113] GCY, 1954, p. 24.

a goal of $50,000, which was soon achieved.[114]

The Mission Endowment Fund constitutes a needed reserve for emergency purposes and is built up from four sources specified in the Constitution as (a) cash contributions in any amount; (b) promissory notes in excess of $25; (c) donations and other valuables from wills designated for mission work; and (d) income from sale of church properties when congregations dissolve or relocate without specifying the purpose of the proceeds.[115]

Already in 1901, the Brethren made a wise decision with regard to the use of the Endowment Fund. While interest generated from this fund should flow into the mission treasury for ongoing work, the principal could not be used except in unusual emergencies. The Great Depression in the 1930s and the Zaire evacuation project in 1962 fell into this category. But even then conditions were defined by the Constitution. The mission treasury, however, has always been able to borrow from the Endowment Fund when special needs arose, particularly during the summer months when donations are slow in coming in.[116]

The General Mission Treasury

The moneys for this treasury are generated from a variety of sources within the Conference.

General description. The 1936 Constitution states that these funds come from offerings given in churches at harvest and mission festivals, from collections and projects made by youth groups, Sunday schools, and other mission-oriented church organizations, from special donations made as expressions of gratitude to God, and from interest generated by

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[114] Abraham Schellenberg, Franz Ediger, and John Harms, "An die Gemeinden in Nord-Amerika und Sonst," Zionsbote, August 8, 1900, pp. 2-3; GCY, 1954, p. 24; Konstitution, 1909, p. 4.

[115] Konstitution, 1909, pp. 8-9; Statuten, 1901, pp. 9-10; Constitution, 1936, p. 21; 1963, pp. 34-35.

[116] Statuten, 1901, pp. 9-10; Constitution, 1963, pp. 35-36, 60.

the Mission Endowment Fund as well as from incomes from farms and other properties given to the Conference for missional purposes. According to the Constitutions, "All gifts designated in general terms for mission work flow into this treasury."[117] And, I might add, whatever flows into this general treasury flows out through the operational mission budget to support the missionary force in all its activities as well as the missionary programs in all their diverse evangelistic, social, and institutional emphases.

Budget contributors. The major portion of the annual mission budget depends on freewill contributions made by ordinary church members who, in a Pauline phrase, "must work for a living" (1 Cor. 9:6 NIV). Some work as blue collar workers and others as clerics; some work as laborers and some as professionals; some are farmers and others are entrepreneurs. Whatever their line of work may be, it is assumed that Mennonite Brethren have a sense of Christian stewardship, including the financial component. They are all familiar with the Old Testament form of the tithe as well as with the New Testament norm expressed in generous giving "according to what one has, not according to what he does not have" (2 Cor. 8:12). They also know that giving grudgingly is neither in keeping with the norm nor does it attract God's pleasure, "for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

Budget contributions. Even if not all Mennonite Brethren are cheerful givers, and even if some are not givers at all, there has been a remarkable spirit of devotion and loyalty in meeting the Conference budget through the general treasury by voluntary contributions. Approximately 78 percent of the total mission budget comes from those who faithfully contribute to the overall Conference budget managed by the Board of Trustees, who then allot a certain portion to the general foreign mission treasury (Figure 13). For example, during during the 1981-82 fiscal year the mission budget was

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[117] Constitution, 1936, pp. 26-27; cf. GCY, 1981, pp. 127-131.

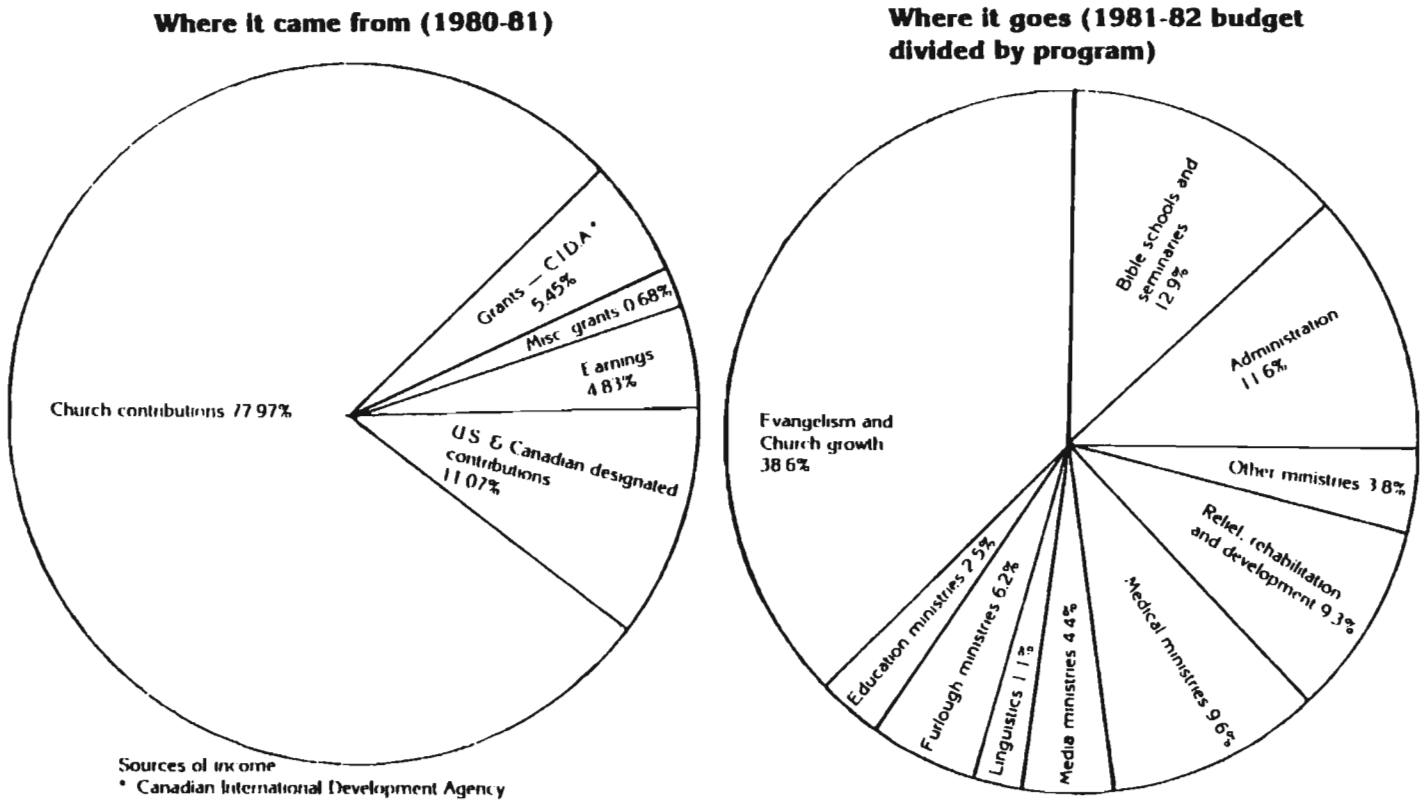
Where it came from (1980-81)
Church contributions 77 97%
Grants – CIDA* 5 45%
Misc grants 0 68%
Earnings 4 83%
US & Canadian designated contributions 11 07%
Sources of income
* Canadian International Development Agency
Where it goes (1981-82 budget divided by program)
Evangelism and Church growth 38 6%
Bible schools and seminaries 12 9%
Administration 11 6%
Other ministries 3 8%
Relief, rehabilitation and development 9 3%
Medical ministries 9 6%
Media ministries 4 4%
Linguistics 1 1%
Furlough ministries 6 2%
Education ministries 2 5%

Figure 13

Mission Money

Source: GCY, 1981, p. 128.

$5,089,285, which meant that each MB Church member on the American continent gave $98 toward foreign mission.[118] The 1978-79 fiscal budget stood at $2,813,970, requiring $78 from each member.[119]

The Designated Gift Treasury

The financial reports prior to 1900 already indicate the existence of a category in the treasury known as Gaben für besondere Zwecke. The Statuten of 1901 contain a special paragraph on designated gifts, which in the 1909 edition of the Konstitution is entitled, Spezielle Kasse. "All gifts which are designated by the donors for some specific purpose," says the document, "are remitted, if at all possible, in accordance with the wishes of the donors." In the event that the gift cannot be processed for the specified purpose, the donors are informed and asked to reassign them. If no specific redesignation can be secured, then these gifts flow into the General Mission Treasury.[120]

The thinking behind this particular treasury has not remained unchallenged, because "idealists maintain that the Christian's giving should be unto the Lord and without any strings attached."[121] That may be a good principle, but is it realistic? Can it not be argued instead that the establishment of this treasury was a wise move on the part of the early fathers? In retrospect it seems that way. For one thing, it expresses confidence that individuals and families within the church are mature and capable of deciding how they want to carry out their stewardship responsibility by designating their "gifts unto the Lord" for very special people, causes, or projects in the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, it allows donors greater freedom to rely on the Holy Spirit's leading in their stewardship development. Then too,

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[118] GCY, 1981, pp. 99, 127.

[119] GCY, 1978, p. 68.

[120] Statuten, 1901, p. 10; Konstitution, 1909, p. 9; Constitution, 1936, p. 27.

[121] Peters, Foundation, p. 118.

designated gifts are an expression of the donor's confidence in the mission administration. Where such confidence exists donors of designated gifts will also be donors of regular gifts which will flow into the General Mission Treasury.

The Mission Pension Treasury

The Committee for Foreign Mission brought a recommendation to the 1927 Convention in Henderson, Nebraska, asking the Conference to create a Pension Treasury for retired and/or disabled missionaries. The Conference in turn charged the Committee to prepare a plan for such a fund, and in three years present it to the Conference for consideration.[122] The Committee did, indeed, come with a new recommendation concerning the welfare of returned and retired missionaries, requesting (a) that the Conference support such people for a period of up to three years after they return from the field; and (b) that the Conference purchase several homes for these missionaries. From the discussion which followed, it is quite evident that neither the delegates nor the retired missionaries present were entirely pleased with the Committee's work. Thus the chairman of the Committee for Foreign Mission presented a third recommendation from the Convention floor, namely that funds should be collected in the churches for the Pension Treasury and, if necessary, a loan should be made from the Mission Endowment Fund to establish a pension fund. It is not clear whether this motion was voted on or not.[123]

A more serious move was made at the 1936 Convention in Reedley. The Conference now took the initiative and appointed a three-member Pension Committee, which in consultation with the Committee for Foreign Mission was to take aggressive leadership in this matter. The Pension Committee worked out a plan for generating a pension fund: (a) Every Sunday school should take one collection each month which should average out to about five cents for each member; and (b) any

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[122] GCY, 1927, pp. 31-32.

[123] GCY, 1930, pp. 27-29.

church member or friend of mission should feel free to make voluntary contributions.[124]

Those were noble beginnings. But the method of collecting funds from the youngest group of people in the churches for the oldest group of missionaries who hardly ever became visible to these young donors was at best inadequate. In 1943 when the first appropriations to four retirees were approved, the Executive Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions stated: "As time goes on, the demands on the 'pension treasury' started in 1936, become heavier."[125] While he still challenged the congregations of the constituency to come through with their Sunday school and other sporadic contributions, it was obvious that he was searching for new ways to generate sufficient pension funds. By 1951 many congregations had not only discontinued their Sunday school levy but made no contribution whatsoever toward the pension fund.[126] That was bad news to returning missionaries who had spent their lives spreading good news.

In 1960 the Board of Foreign Missions drew up a special document on "Social Security and Pension Regulation." This document was adopted by the Conference; it clarifies several points: (a) it clearly outlines equalization of benefits; (b) it makes provision for a "sinking fund" to safeguard the treasury from depletion in the event of unforseen needs; (c) it defines eligibility of missionaries to receive pension from the mission treasury; (d) it also outlines safeguards against liability in cases when services have to be terminated; and (e) it provides funds for special cases, such as fatalities during labor and life of missionaries.[127]

This rather long process has led to the present policy under which retirement allowances are paid from the General

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[124] GCY, 1939, p. 11; cf. GCY, 1936, p. 29.

[125] GCY, 1943, p. 22.

[126] GCY, 1951, pp. 56-57.

[127] GCY, 1960, p. 80.

Mission Treasury in order to supplement social security and other old-age benefits for missionaries.[128]

Program and Development Fund

The Board of Missions and Services has through the years responded to a variety of emergency programs in countries where it has established churches and/or a missionary force; from refugee ministries in Somalia and Pakistan to the more recent Sullana relief project in Peru. Numerous sources have been used to finance such ministries.[129] One rather consistent source of income is the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) fund, established by the Federal Government of Canada on the basis of a matching amount. Similar programs are available from the provincial governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan.[130] Peter Kroeker, the Development Consultant, secures CIDA funds, develops programs in consultation with the Administrative Secretariat, and administrates the projects within the larger context of the programs of Missions and Services.

At its March 1982 meetings the Board of Missions and Services established a special Program and Development Fund with the Board of Trustees. The initial resolution reads: "This fund will be used for undesignated contributions and unused funds. The interest from earnings will be used for operational expense and the principal can be withdrawn by Board action."[131] This has already proved to be a very

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[128] Cf. Peters, Foundations, p. 119. For more details on the development of policies governing the program from 1965-1984 see Resolutions, Vol. II, pp. 95-100; Vol. III, section on "Retirement" under the broader heading on "Finances."

[129] See Board of Missions and Services, Agenda and Minutes, October 1983, p. 4; April 1984, pp. 8-9; October 1980, p. 10; October 1982, p. 6; March 1981, p. 11.

[130] For the nature of these programs and how they are used by the Board of Missions/Services see Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services in Whole-Man Ministries: Helping People in Need (Winnipeg: Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services, [1984]), a promotional pamphlet.

[131] Board of Missions and Services, Agenda and Minutes, March 1982, p. 12.

useful arrangement, not only to have resources available to match CIDA grants for specified development programs such as health care, vocational education and the like, but also in the event that disaster strikes, as it did during the devastating floods in Peru in 1983.

Concluding Observations

There is an undocumented consensus in recent years that the Mennonite Brethren have placed unduly high demands on their missionary candidates. My hypothesis is that these demands may have had--and still have--both positive and negative repercussions: positive, in that they have produced a high caliber of missionaries working with the Mennonite Brethren; negative, in that the number serving with their own denomination has been severely reduced. This means, on the one hand, that there has been a fairly high level of endurance and fruitfulness and a low rate of casualties ("dropouts") throughout the generations. On the other hand, Mennonite Brethren mission candidates have not only been in great demand by other mission agencies, they may also have been attracted to these agencies because of less stringent requirements. The record of 1981 makes the striking statement that 262 Mennonite Brethren missionaries--including short-termers--were affiliated with their own denominational organizations while 434 were at the same time working for non-Mennonite Brethren agencies.[132]

Even if this is no new phenomenon, it does raise some legitimate questions. Why, for example, is there a constant lament of MB mission leaders over the shortage of workers? Could it not be directly related to the fact that for every five MB missionaries serving in an MB setting there are eight serving in non-MB mission contexts? And how does this affect the Conference mission budget? While again there are no hard data available, is it not reasonable to assume that Mennonite Brethren church members would support their own sons and daughters, friends and fellow members from their

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[132] GCY, 1981, p. 60. Number includes MCC workers.

own congregations who have chosen to serve under non-Conference para-church structures, where the requirements for preparation and service are less stringent than the standards set by Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services?

Two reports of recent years may serve as an indication (not as conclusive evidence) that the above hypothesis has some validity. According to a "Statistical Report" on distribution of funds for the three-year period of 1977-1980, the Conference expended $8,621,702 or 13.8 percent of the total budget on "General Conference Causes," and $3,012,016 or 4.8 percent of the total budget on non-Conference projects.[133] Total expenses of the Board of Missions and Services for the 1978-1981 triennium were $3,487,095, which is only $475,079 above non-Conference giving for a similar three-year period, 1977 to 1980.[134] The 1985 Financial Report of the Southern District Conference may serve as another indicator of the Mennonite Brethren giving pattern. While the General Conference treasury received 13.6 percent or $673,408.63 (including the portion for Missions and Services) for the Southern District for the fiscal year of 1984-85, non-Conference agencies received 9.5 percent of $470,979.16 of the total budget for the same period of time. This included contributions to MCC.[135]

What we do not know in either of the above examples is (a) how much the Mennonite Brethren actually gave to non-Conference projects that was not reported to the treasurer; and (b) how much of the recorded gifts actually went for mission work. Striking, however, is the fact that the Conference treasury received nearly the same percentage of the total budget for the given period in each case: 13.8 percent from the General Conference and 13.6 percent from the Southern District Conference; and that in the case of the General Conference the sum given to non-Conference

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[133] GCY, 1981, p. 61.

[134] GCY, 1981, p. 131.

[135] Southern District Conference Yearbook, 1985, p. 32.

projects is nearly as high as that given to the mission budget of the Conference.

Here, then, is a source of tension in terms of both personnel and financial resources in Mennonite Brethren mission thinking, a subject that is frequently discussed but for which the Conference has yet to find a satisfactory resolution.

Chapter 12

RELATIONSHIPS IN MISSION

Introduction

In Chapters 8 to 11 I have dealt with nature, structure, action, and resources characteristic of Mennonite Brethren mission since its beginning in 1885. As seen there, mission does not consist only of church and mission structures, of God's call to mission and recruitment of personnel, of sending out missionaries and supporting them with prayers and finances, and of evangelistic work and the planting of young churches. All these aspects of mission, notes Paul Hiebert, require "the establishment of relationships between individuals and groups of individuals. To a great extent the success of missions lies in the nature and quality of these relationships."[1] Hiebert is right. The key to fruitfulness in mission work lies in Christian relationships patterned after the spirit and attitude of Christ.

Mennonite Brethren have faced the question of relationships in one form or another throughout their entire history of mission. This problem is not unique to their situation; other mission organizations face the same questions. The only thing unique for the Mennonite Brethren is that they have had to contend with Conference mission as well as with independent missions created by their own members within their own denomination. Therein lies a peculiar kind of mission thinking that has become a test case for the quality of relationships prevailing in the brotherhood.

At times their spirit of love has been strained to the breaking point and test scores were not high. After all, the Mennonite Brethren have always understood themselves as a corporate body, having both a missionary dimension and a

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[1] Paul Hiebert, "Study Guide," in G. W. Peters, Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions (Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1984), p. 176.

missionary intention; they have seen themselves as being both missionary in nature and missionizing in action.[2] In all their mission endeavor they "are striving to maintain a functional polity which best expresses the New Testament teaching on the church."[3] They understand this to mean "the church in mission" rather than "the church and mission."[4] That is why any deviation from the corporate concept through independent efforts has caused the Brethren not only ecclesiological frustration, but also serious relational consternation.

In order to gain a better understanding of Mennonite Brethren types and levels of relationships in mission, I will lift out several areas of discussion: (a) I will begin by reviewing three independent mission endeavors which severely tested the fraternal spirit of MB mission thinking between 1909 and 1945. (b) Because those cases occurred for the most part during the long administrative tenure of H. W. Lohrenz, it is important to show how he sought to resolve this difficult problem. (c) In the third section, I will offer a brief analysis of Conference documents which will elucidate the official position and the struggle through which it was achieved. (d) Finally, a brief overview of the wider relational concerns and models will help to put in a positive light Mennonite Brethren relational developments within the larger historical context.

Relationships Three Times Tested

There have been times when the Conference vision for mission was too confined, its mission thinking too restricted,

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[2] For an explanation of the terms "missionary dimension" and "missionary intention" see this study, Chapter 1, pp. 6-7.

[3] Frank C. Peters, "Introduction," in The Church in Mission: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to J. B. Toews, ed. A. J. Klassen (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1967), p. xiv.

[4] See Paul Hiebert's essay on "Social Structure and Church Growth," particularly his "Mission Models," in Crucial Dimensions in World Evangelization, ed. Arthur Glasser et al. (Pasadena: William Carey, 1976), pp. 61-74, 67-70.

and its administrative actions too rigid; at least so it was perceived by those vigorous and aggressive spirits whose visions for mission were wider than that of their denomination, whose compelling urgency was compounded by impatience with Conference indecisions, and whose faith in God became their only sustaining resource. Such a spirit prevailed in Russia, as I have shown in Chapter 7, and emerged again in America. Three cases are of special significance for this study, each involving personnel, an agency, and a place of service. I will refer to them simply as the South China Mission, the Kafumba Mission, and the Bololo Mission, although the first went far beyond the territory of southern China.

While the stories of these missions are important, they cannot be told here.[5] The major focus must be limited to relationships between these independent ventures and the Conference mission, and their efforts of resolving differences.

The Case of the South China Mission

The burden for China did not emerge with the Mennonite Brethren. Missionaries from other Mennonite groups had gone there under different agencies as early as the 1890s. Yet the H. C. Bartels of the Krimmer MB Church are usually viewed as the pioneers who laid the groundwork for the Mennonites in China. They began work under the China Mennonite Mission in

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[5] For the full story of these missions see Frank J. Wiens, Pionierarbeit unter den Hakkas in Süd-China (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1924); G. W. Peters, The Growth of Foreign Missions in the Mennonite Brethren Church (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Foreign Missions, 1947), pp. 208-282; J. B. Toews, The Mennonite Brethren Church in Zaire (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1978), pp. 39-73; Phyllis Martens, The Mustard Tree: The Story of Mennonite Brethren Missions (Fresno: Mennonite Brethren Board of Christian Education in Cooperation with the Board of Missions/Services, 1971), pp. 48-62; Der Kleine Afrika-Bote, official organ of the Afrika Missions-Verein, 1936-1943; Anna Bartsch, Die verborgene Hand in meiner Lebensgeschichte (Nelson, B.C.: Arthur Bartsch, 1982), pp. 61-184.

1901, and in 1905 opened an independent field in the Shantung-Honan provinces of North China. When they returned to America in 1906 to seek support for their work, they generated genuine mission interest among the Mennonite Brethren for the evangelization of the people in China. In fact, several MB missionaries accompanied them to their field.[6] But MB mission leadership of that time was not at all convinced that this was the direction to go.[7]

The China question on the Convention floor. The question of opening a field in China was an item of intense discussion at the 1909 Convention in Henderson, Nebraska, the home church of Frank and Agnes Wiens. During seminary studies in Rochester, New York, Wiens had been involved in the rescue mission there.[8] After that he was an itinerant evangelist in the Conference.[9] Since the response to his ministry had been quite positive, and since the Wienses were deeply convinced of God's call for mission work in China, they appeared to be the choice couple for a pioneering venture in that giant land.[10]

When Heinrich Voth, Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Mission, introduced the subject, several factors became immediately apparent: (a) the door to China was open to the Mennonite Brethren; (b) missionary candidates were available and eager to go; (c) the delegates were supportive of the new venture; and (d) the work in China would be

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[6] H. C. Bartel, A Short Review of the First Mennonite Mission in China ([H. C. Bartel: Tsao Hsien, Shantung Province, 1913]), pp. 3-11; cf. S. F. Pannabecker, "China Missions," in Mennonite Encyclopedia, 4 vols., ed. H. S. Bender et al. (Scottdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955), vol. 1., pp. 560-562; G. W. Peters, Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions (Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1984), pp. 134-135.

[7] GCY, 1912, p. 23. For the meaning of GCY see Chapter 8, footnote #22.

[8] Wiens, Pionierarbeit, pp. 23-25.

[9] GCY, 1906, p. 5; 1907, p. 40; 1908, p. 33.

[10] Wiens, Pionierarbeit, p. 23f.

cost-effective and therefore not interfere with existing projects. The discussion was positive and the prospects of opening a field in China appeared to become reality.[11]

But there was one dissenting voice that changed the entire mood. P. K. Wohlgemuth expressed concern over diverting mission funds to other projects than the ones already existing. Chairman Voth came to his aid and explained:

> While we want to recognize all mission efforts, we should not forget that our primary responsibility is to our own mission work which we have already accepted. Other fellowships will not support our missions; we are responsible for them and owe it to ourselves to maintain them.[12]

The spirit of unity had left the Convention floor, and quickened tempers with rising emotions had taken its place. The disruption of serenity led to the formulation of a vague recommendation. "If there is general approval, and if the Wienses are willing to go to China," so the resolution was formed, "then the Committee should be authorized to accept the China field."[13]

A broken consensus. Neither of the two conditional "if-clauses" was valid, for there was general approval with only two of the eleven voices dissenting, and the Wienses were willing to go. Thus the language of the resolution was more confusing and ambiguous than the preceding discussions had been. The message of the Committee to the Wienses that it "would be impossible" to send them to China as Conference missionaries increased the existing uncertainty and strained prevailing relations which were never completely resolved. Wiens wrote in response:

> The powerful hand of the Lord was upon us, moving us mightily away toward China without any means, without any backing, trusting only in Him. . . . No matter what questions we raised, there was only one compelling

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[11] GCY, 1909, pp. 33-34.

[12] GCY, 1909, p. 33.

[13] GCY, 1909, p. 34.

urge, "Go, the Lord will go before you." My wife then decidedly said, "Yes, we are going. The Lord will take care of us."[14]

Determined to go on their own, the Wienses decided to travel via Russia and to visit the MB churches there. When they left their home church, H. P. Schröder said to them in his farewell address: "We are commending you not to a [mission] committee, but to God and to the Word of His Grace."[15] Those were kind words, but hardly a balm for the wounded candidates.

Frank and Agnes Wiens spent about a year among the Mennonites in Russia, evangelizing and preaching in villages from the Ukrainian south to the Siberian north. They gathered sufficient funds and in 1911 began work among the Hakkas in Fukien province of South China.[16]

Reactions upon reactions. Meanwhile, the Conference still debated how to respond in a positive way to the work in China. The leaders felt uneasy that both the KMB Bartels and the MB Wienses had gone out independently, the Bartels to the North and the Wienses to the South of that giant land. Bartel had even succeeded in forming the China Mennonite Mission Society, an agency consisting of Mennonite Brethren, Krimmer Mennonite Brethren, and Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. Congregations of all three contributed funds and supplied personnel.[17]

Obviously, the Conference was not pleased. Abraham Schellenberg complained at the 1912 Convention that Bartel was too much of an independent individualist who made his own plans and selected his own missionaries. Furthermore, declared Schellenberg, "It is a mistake in our churches that they allow everyone to come in and collect money." Therefore,

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[14] Wiens, Pionierarbeit, pp. 24-25.

[15] Wiens, Pionierarbeit, p. 27.

[16] Wiens, Pionierarbeit, pp. 16-22, 27-81.

[17] Cf. Pannabecker, "China Missions," p. 560f.; Peters, Foundations, p. 134f.; Bartel, Mission in China, pp. 3, 11-52.

the Conference resolved (a) to forbid MB members from participating administratively in "Brother Bartel's mission" (the China Mennonite Mission Society); (b) not to give Bartel permission to collect funds in MB congregations; but (c) not to keep people from making freewill contributions if they chose to do so.[18]

The Frank Wienses wanted to work as Conference missionaries, and applied for acceptance. The Committee for Foreign Mission listed a variety of reasons for rejecting their request. "According to the Word of God," said one delegate, "we do not have the liberty to accept such a work." It was also pointed out that (a) since the churches had not given enthusiastic affirmation for this work, (b) since the financial responsibilities for India and Indiahoma required all resources available, and (c) since the Wienses had gone to China as independent missionaries, the Conference had resolved to let the issue rest for another three years.[19]

At the 1915 Convention the rather tense relationship between the Conference and the Wienses appeared to take a more fraternal direction. (a) The Conference agreed to support the Wienses with $500 annually; (b) it authorized the Committee for Foreign Mission to study the question of acceptance of the Hakka field; (c) it requested the Committee to bring a recommendation to the next Conference sessions, and (d) it agreed that J. H. Pankratz, missionary to India, should visit the Wienses in South China.[20]

New causes to break old cords. Due to World War I, the next Convention was held in 1919 instead of 1918, as previously scheduled. That may have been providential with respect to the work in China, because time was like a balm of Gilead in the healing of relationships between the Committee for Foreign Mission in America and the missionary

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[18] GCY, 1912, pp. 22-23.

[19] GCY, 1912, p. 23.

[20] GCY, 1915, p. 19; cf. Wiens, Pionierarbeit, pp. 280-283.

family in China. Both procedure and action taken at the Convention are worthy of note.

1. The Conference listened to a written report sent in by F. J. Wiens about the status of the work among the Hakkas.

2. Missionary Pankratz, who had visited the China field, confirmed the report, added his personal perceptions about the work and recommended that the China field be accepted as a Conference project and that additional workers be sent out to help the Wienses.

3. There was evident readiness on the part of the Conference to respond in the most positive way possible. Several resolutions were made: (a) that the work among the Hakkas be accepted as a Conference mission field; (b) that Frank and Agnes Wiens serve as the first Mennonite Brethren missionaries in South China; (c) that Helena Heppner, a nurse, and Tina Kornelsen, a teacher, be sent as missionaries to China to assist the Wienses in their work; (d) that the J. S. Dicks and the B. F. Wienses be considered as additional missionaries for China; and (e) that Treasurer J. W. Wiens be authorized to dispatch a special cable message to Frank and Agnes Wiens about Conference action and its new relationship toward them and their service in China.[21] "Finally our many prayers were to be answered," wrote Wiens in response. "We gave all glory to the Lord."[22] Thus what had begun as an independent missionary venture in 1909 became a Conference project in 1919.

Unfortunately, however, this did not lay to rest old tensions or improve relationships in a permanent way. The official records first of the Committee for Foreign Mission as well as those of the later Board of Foreign Mission from 1924 to 1943 again reflect increased tensions. In fact, no single item on the agenda took up so much time and energy in Board sessions as the China issue. The causes for the

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[21] GCY, 1919, pp. 94, 96, 100; Wiens, Pionierarbeit, pp. 292-295.

[22] Wiens, Pionierarbeit, p. 293.

difficulties were not only relational, but also circumstantial and administrative.

First, Frank Wiens requested by letter to a friend that the Committee for Foreign Mission together with the Board of Directors allow Chairman H. W. Lohrenz to visit the fields in India and China. His rationale was fivefold: (a) the Missionary Field Commission had instructed him to make the request; (b) such a visit would be most profitable for both the work on the fields and the churches in America; (c) Lohrenz was the right person to undertake such an important visit, for he would personally benefit from it and would contribute to solving existing problems at home and abroad; (d) each missionary had pledged to contribute $25 toward the cost of such an undertaking. The request met with resistance. Why had Wiens not talked about such a major undertaking when he had been home on furlough? Was he avoiding personal communication with the mission leaders? Convention delegates evidently thought so. After a prolonged discussion of the letter, the decision was reached to study the matter further and to come with a recommendation to the Convention in 1927.[23]

Second, the political situation brought much distress to both the missionaries and the young churches--distress which in turn impacted either directly or indirectly the relationship between Wiens and the other missionaries and the Committee for Foreign Mission. Thus, instead of talking about the realization of the proposed field trip, the Committee recommended to the 1927 Convention "that, under the prevailing circumstances, we approve the early return to the homeland of Brother and Sister F. J. Wiens."[24] Other

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[23] Letter from F. J. Wiens in China to H. H. Fleming in Corn, Oklahoma. GCY, 1924, pp. 36-38.

[24] A. E. Janzen and Herbert Giesbrecht, eds., We Recommend: Recommendations and Resolutions of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1978), p. 113; cf. GCY, 1927, pp. 30-33. According to the record, the Wienses came home because of the political tensions in China and for schooling their children in America (GCY, 1933, p. 24).

missionaries were permitted to stay or transfer to other fields, including the Bartel Mission; those home on furlough (except the Wienses) were encouraged to return to China as soon as the political situation would make it advisable. Such official decisions did not mend broken relations.

Third, the Committee for Foreign Mission apparently resolved not to send the Wienses back to China. Wiens responded at the 1930 Convention by saying that he had entered that ministry in obedience to God's call and was unable to go back on that calling.[25] In 1931 the Committee, however, reduced the budget for work in China from the allotted sum of $1,000 to $400 with the threatening comment that "if it should become necessary, all support would be discontinued."[26] The Great Depression may have been the cause for these measures on the part of the Committee. But for the Wienses it was the handwriting on the wall; they would again have to venture out on their own if they wanted to return to China. The Conference agreed and "pledged them prayer support for their undertaking of returning back to the field of the Gentiles."[27] The Great Depression of the 1930s caused serious budget constraints for all mission programs, but the work in China was affected more than other fields, and a number of MB missionaries transferred to the Bartel Mission.[28]

Fourth, the story of the South China mission reflects hope in tragedy. The correspondence between the Secretary-Treasurer and the missionaries in China, particularly Frank Wiens, portrays a chapter of relational MB mission thinking which more than any other bears the marks of clay in some

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[25] GCY, 1930, p. 28.

[26] Committee for Foreign Mission, Agenda and Minutes, September 12, 1931, p. 25. Cf. item "Budget," GCY, 1930, p. 30.

[27] GCY, 1933, p. 25. Cf. Committee for Foreign Mission, Agenda and Minutes, August 19, 1933, pp. 33, 81-82.

[28] GCY, 1933, pp. 45-46; Committee for Foreign Mission, Agenda and Minutes, November 27, 1933, p. 36.

of the human vessels whom God allowed to sow the gospel seed on Chinese soil and to direct mission efforts on the American side.[29] Still, despite the fact that relationships were sometimes severely tested, at other times even shattered and broken, there is a positive note in that the majority of missionaries never became involved in prolonged relational tensions. At the March 1939 sessions of the Board for Foreign Missions, there was evident a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. The minutes of the September meetings stated that the Board had made a sincere attempt to improve relationships with the workers among the Hakkas in Shanghand in general and with F. J. Wiens in particular.[30] The changed attitude of the Board prepared the way for positive action. The Conference was ready to accept again the responsibility for the South China field, with the Wienses as its missionaries. Principles of agreement were being worked out by the Board of Missions and the Board of Reference and Counsel.[31] Although the Wienses meanwhile had had to return home for health reasons, negotiations were completed at the Conference level. The document stated among other things:

> The joint board appreciates the energetic and sacrificial work of the F. J. Wienses. It also hopes that they soon will regain their health and thereby be enabled to remain in this work for many more years. The joint board has full confidence that they will accept these basic conditions of the document in the same spirit of brotherly love in which they have been drafted. It is also the hope of the board that the Wienses will be able to cooperate in the spirit of Jesus Christ and thereby contribute to the consolidation and expansion of the mission work in China.[32]

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[29] See the correspondence included in the files of the Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, 1936-1942.

[30] Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, March 29-30, pp. 26-27; October 14, 1939, pp. 37-38.

[31] GCY, 1939, p. 26; cf. Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, April 5, 1940, pp. 43-55.

[32] Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, April 5-10, 1940, p. 55.

When the Secretary-Treasurer reported the positive outcome of years of negotiations, he also stated that the Wienses had been "looking forward to the day when they might return to their field of labor in China." But, he added thoughtfully, "it was not given to Brother Wiens that he should see the fulfillment of his hope," for he died on September 28, 1942.[33]

A tune on a different chord. The tone of the 1943 report by the Secretary-Treasurer clearly reflects profound relational changes on the part of the mission administration. Lohrenz reviewed the work in South and North China of the past forty years. As he described how God had spared the lives of many missionaries during times of famine, revolution and foreign invasion, he was not only emotionally touched, but also moved to assess the work of the H. C. Bartels with greater favor than ever before. Since the Bartels were exploring possibilities of occupying a field which had not yet been reached with the gospel, Lohrenz challenged the Convention:

> This places a question squarely before us. Can we, the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, remain unresponsive to bleeding China? Should we not ask the Lord for ways and means to send some of our workers to western China in search for a field? It has been reported that the Roman Catholic church is preparing to send one thousand missionaries to China as soon as the way opens again. Is there nothing that we can do?
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> But let us not look only to distant lands. There are thousands upon thousands of Chinese within our borders. There are two large centers on the west coast. It is reported that there are more than 6000 Chinamen within the confines of Los Angeles, and Chinatown in San Francisco numbers at least three times as many. A missionary family from China has volunteered for service among them. Shall we accept the opportunity and bring the little financial sacrifice that will be connected with such an undertaking? The Chinese are a race with a future. Do we wish to have a share in their evangelization?[34]

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[33] GCY, 1943, p. 12; cf. Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, special report of the work on foreign missions, May 20, 1943, p. 5.

[34] GCY, 1943, p. 13.

So profound were the relational changes that had taken place during the final six years of Lohrenz's administrative responsibilities that in 1945 the Conference was ready to accept the Bartel Mission in China, both the old field in Shantung Province as well as the new field in Kansu Province.[35] Negotiations between the Board of Foreign Missions and the China Mennonite Mission Society were immediately set in motion.

On May 7, 1946, there was a joint meeting in Hillsboro, Kansas, of the MB Board of Foreign Missions, the China Mennonite Mission Society, the EMB Foreign Mission Board, and the KMB Foreign Mission Board. The record suggests that the members of the CMMS had come prepared to resign and thereby dissolve the Bartel Mission in order to allow the three denominations either to form a new agency or make other arrangements for China. Since neither the KMB Church nor the EMB Church felt "strong enough to carry the load," representatives of the MB Church suggested an alternate plan by which the Board of Foreign Missions would be "ready to take over the China work as soon as the C.M.M.S. dissolves and transfers to it all its interests in the China work."[36] The CMMS was dissolved, but its interests were not transferred. Thus the solution was in reality not that simple. At the April 1947 sessions the Board of Foreign Missions "decided to let the matter rest until the Lord clears the situation."[37] A year later (April 1948) that desired clarity finally seemed to dawn along the lines of a kind of "comity agreement."[38] Thus one senses a spirit of relief pulsating in the report given by A. E. Janzen, the Executive

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[35] GCY, 1945, p. 24.

[36] Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, 1946-1948, p. 160.

[37] Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, April 19-23, 1947, p. 1.

[38] See the proposal made by the Board of Foreign Missions to the KMB Foreign Mission Board (Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, April 27, 1948, p. 5).

Secretary-Treasurer, to the 1948 Convention in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Regarding the Bartel Mission of the West Field in Kansu and Shensi--though a thousand miles northwest of the South Field among the Hakkas--said Janzen, "The Board is glad to report that its organization and relation to the sister conferences has been largely clarified." He went on to explain:

> The present arrangement is that the K.M.B. Conference labor in the area west of the Kialing and Pailing Rivers and that the M.B. workers serve the area east of these rivers, and that each Board administer its own field. Should workers of one or the other Conference be assigned to a field of the sister conference, then the respective workers come under the regulation adopted by the General M.B. Conference in 1945. The E.M.B. Conference is limiting its support and workers to the East Field in Shantung and Honan.[39]

By this time the Mennonite Brethren had fourteen missionaries assigned to China and an operating budget of $16,778.95 annually for the 1946-1948 interim.[40]

A test of a different nature. The political situation had constantly deteriorated, and before the work could be established in cooperation with the Chinese church and in a spirit of unity between the various mission agencies and missionaries, it had to be discontinued.

Some of the concluding lines penned in 1951 about the work of the Mennonite Brethren in China read like this:

> The powers that be have closed the doors to mission activity in China for the present[,] perhaps permanently. . . . Even though the political unrest in China played havoc with many of our plans, God still blessed the work that was done and it bore fruit. . . . All stations are now turned over to the Chinese churches and are in care of Chinese Christian leaders. . . . The critical conditions in China put the Christians . . . in that land to a real test. . . . However, we shall continually encourage each other to intercede for these grievously oppressed children of God.[41]

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[39] GCY, 1948, p. 17; cf. GCY, 1945, p. 74.

[40] GCY, 1948, pp. 16, 26, 27.

[41] GCY, 1951, pp. 34, 37, 38.

The China experience had been a test in mission relationships. The blame for the failure cannot be placed entirely at the feet of the independent spirits of the pioneer missionaries. The obvious attitudinal mellowing on the part of the leadership in 1943 was like a bridge spanning a yawning chasm of some twenty years of severance between the Board of Foreign Mission and independent missionaries: the two met midway, prepared to walk the rest of the way together. Unfortunately, Frank Wiens, the pioneer MB missionary to China, died before the bridge was finished. In retrospect, we cannot pass judgment but ask the question, how much more fruitful might the work in China have been had the relationship between the mission administration and the missionaries been truly Christian from its beginning in 1909 to its termination in 1949?

The Case of the Kafumba Mission

As I have shown in Chapter 10, the Mennonites were anxious by the end of the nineteenth century to establish their own mission work on the continent of Africa. Peter and Martha Wedel and Heinrich and Maria Enns were their first candidates. Yet because the Brethren did not yet have a mission field in Africa and because of aggressive recruitment on the part of the Berlin Baptist Mission Society, the two couples went to Cameroon with the Baptists, receiving financial support from the Brethren. But Africa never lost its appeal, and within another generation consecrated young people were called out of the ranks of the MB Churches to give themselves as a living sacrifice for the "Dark Continent," as it was then called.[42]

Aaron Janzen and the Congo Inland Mission. Two historical notes are important to bear in mind at the outset of this discussion. One is that Aaron Janzen came from the same mission-minded MB congregation in Mountain Lake, Minnesota,

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[42] [A. E. Janzen], Foreign Missions: Africa (Hillsboro, KS: The Board of Foreign Missions, 1947), p. 7.

in which the Ennses had received nurture and direction for their call to Africa some years earlier. "From the train platform," records J. B. Toews, "the departing couple reminded the congregation of the words of Romans 14:8: 'For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.'"[43] As we know, they died soon after their arrival in Cameroon. Their words and example became an irresistible force in Janzen's life. The other important note is that the Janzens went to Africa with the independent Congo Inland Mission (CIM) and not with the Committee for Foreign Mission of the MB Conference. It was this second factor that became a real test for Conference church-mission relationships, a test that was prolonged for nearly thirty years.

The Congo Inland Mission (CIM) was founded by Rev. and Mrs. L. B. Haigh of America with assistance from Alvin J. Stevenson on the African side. It was a joint project of the Defenseless Mennonites and the Central Conference of Mennonites, both of Amish background and orientation. Several interesting--if not amusing--observations about this mission organization are noteworthy. First, the two sponsoring groups apparently had money to support missionaries, but not the capacity to produce or recruit them. Second, the central and dominant figure in the organization was Alma Doering, a single woman in the midst of a powerfully patriarchal Mennonite structure. Third, Doering was the daughter of German Lutherans in Chicago, did not receive believers' or adult baptism, and never became a Mennonite. Fourth, not the founders of the CIM, but Doering selected Congo as the mission field, recruited its missionaries from various Mennonite denominations, and collected funds to support the work.[44] Finally, Aaron and Ernestina Janzen of the MB

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[43] Toews, Zaire, p. 42; for Janzen's call to mission see pp. 39-43; cf. [Janzen], Africa, pp. 7-8.

[44] James Juhnke, A People of Mission: A History of General Conference Mennonite Overseas Missions (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1979), pp. 67-68; cf. Janzen , Africa, p. 9; Toews, Zaire, p. 43.

Church were, in Janzen's own words, "the first missionaries to be accepted by the C.I.M. Board; others followed later." Janzen explained how it happened:

> While attending Moody Bible Institute, the Lord of the harvest brought before me the ripened field of Africa. In 1912 I finished Bible school and my wife and I applied to the Congo Inland Mission as candidates for Africa. We were accepted, and the same year, November 20, 1912, we left the homeland arriving January 24, 1913, at C.I.M. station in the Belgian Congo, Africa.[45]

Although the Janzens served under the administration of the CIM, they were supported with prayer and material gifts intercessorily and materially by friends of foreign missions within the constituency of the Mennonite Brethren Conference.[46]

Appeals to the Mennonite Brethren for acceptance of the work. Simultaneous with appeals from missionaries in China came a request from the A. A. Janzens in Africa to be accepted as MB missionaries in the Congo. The letter was read at the 1919 Convention in Mountain Lake, the home church of the Janzens. After some discussion of the request, the Conference resolved "to send Brother and Sister A. A. Janzen heartfelt greetings and to wish them God's rich blessing in their work. Should the Lord open other ways and provide additional means, then it could some time in the future become possible to give consideration to the work in Africa." The rationale for this vague response was three-fold: (a) the Conference had presently much work to do; (b) there was fear among the delegates of too much expansion without adequate consolidation; and (c) the whole question was too new and unfamiliar for the local congregations to respond in a more definitive manner.[47]

In 1920, the Janzens secured permission from the CIM board to begin an independent mission work for the Mennonite

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[45] Janzen , Africa, p. 9.

[46] Janzen , Africa, p. 8.

[47] CGY, 1919, p. 23; cf. GCY, 1939, pp. 24-25; 1943, pp. 21-23.

Brethren. The "request was granted rather reluctantly," wrote Janzen. Yet "knowing it was of the Lord, I went to investigate and to start a pioneer work."[48] And that is precisely what it was: pioneer work. They decided to settle at a place called Kafumba, meaning "nest of elephants." It was situated about 60 kilometers south of Kikwit, one of the current MB centers in Zaire, and had a population of about 200,000 to 300,000 from four major tribal peoples.[49]

Since the Janzens had severed their connection with the CIM, and since the Mennonite Brethren had not yet accepted them as MB missionaries, they were really on their own. They were self-supporting missionaries, living off the produce of the land, including rubber from the trees.[50] Theirs was truly a "faith mission." The Janzens were convinced, however, that, if they did their duty God would not fail them. God was faithful. He gave them both material and spiritual harvests. In 1926, they baptized thirty-seven adult believers who formed the first nucleus of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Africa--nearly two decades before the MB Conference mission officially came to that continent.[51]

In 1927, the Janzens again made an appeal to the Conference to be accepted as MB missionaries and their Kafumba Mission as an MB work. This time they not only wrote, but came personally to the Convention at Henderson, Nebraska. N. N. Hiebert, Secretary of the Committee for Foreign Mission, presented the request from the Janzens and added a recommendation prepared by the Missionsdirektorium. The recommendation stated that (a) if possible, the

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[48] [Janzen], Africa, p. 11.

[49] [Janzen], Africa, pp. 12-25; A. A. Janzen, "Aus Afrika," Zionsbote, December 20, 1922, p. 2; January 10, 1923, p. 2; Toews, Zaire, pp. 48-55, 76-80, 116-118.

[50] A. A. Janzen, "Aus Afrika," Zionsbote, July 11, 1923, p. 3.

[51] Martha Janzen, "Republic of Congo Africa," an unpublished history of the work of the A. A. Janzens, p. 13. In Martha Janzen's "Correspondence and Papers" (unclassified).

Conference should accept the work as its own; (b) if not possible, then the Conference should designate a specified sum of money as a token of goodwill for support of the work; (c) if neither of the above should be possible, then the Conference should at least express empathy (Teilnahme) to the Janzens.

After intense discussion of the proposal, the Conference passed the following resolution: (a) since the question had not been brought before the congregations for consideration, the delegates were not in a position to reach a conclusion on the issue; (b) the delegates should be charged to take the question to their congregation for discussion in order to bring the matter before the 1930 Convention; (c) the Conference would show goodwill to the Janzens by permitting them to visit the MB congregations and accept monetary gifts from them.[52]

This changed attitude of the Conference, wrote Martha Janzen[53] years later, "was an answer to their many days of fasting and prayer. The itinerary of the Janzens proved to be a great blessing to the churches. It opened the eyes of many people and gave the mission many warm friends and sufficient assistance to resume work again after being in America."[54]

On February 2, 1930, A. A. Janzen wrote to the Committee for Foreign Mission, reaffirming his deep longing for a closer working relationship with the conference. "We still are of the opinion," he wrote, "that it is the Lord's will for the Conference to accept this field as its own." After submitting a modest operational budget, including support for the six workers now at the Kafumba Mission, Janzen seems to have paused, as though overcome by fear of another possible

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[52] GCY, 1927, pp. 23-35.

[53] Martha Janzen was the former Martha Hiebert, missionary to Kafumba. She married A. A. Janzen after the death of his first wife Ernestina, 1937.

[54] Janzen, "Republic of Congo," p. 14.

rejection. Then he went on to say, "In the event that the Conference cannot accept this field [now] we would like to ask for about a $1,000--or as much as possible--annual support, and that you remember our work in your prayers."[55]

Again the Conference responded in its usual fashion. While some delegates were in favor of accepting the Kafumba Mission, the majority of them were not. The resolution reads: "That we (as Conference) take a position of goodwill towards the missionaries and the mission, and that we will gladly transmit contributions for this cause, but that we do not see that the time for accepting the (Kafumba) station and the responsibility (for the mission) has come."[56] The Secretary of the Committee for Foreign Mission was instructed to send the usual greetings to the missionaries and the national Christians with the words of Paul:

> Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Cor. 15:58 NIV)

Janzen responded on September 23, 1930, showing disappointment in the Conference action. Yet in his devout spirit and gentle manner he expressed appreciation for the Conference report. "And if it was deemed best not yet to accept our field," he wrote, "then we want to rejoice in every kind of support and assistance we have received and thank for every good thing that we can yet anticipate from our brothers and sisters in the Lord."[58]

In his report to the 1933 Convention held in Hillsboro, Kansas, the Secretary of the Committee for Foreign Mission listed five stations and their personnel as "our mission field, and the missionaries for whom the Conference feels

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[55] Letter in GCY, 1930, pp. 32-33.

[56] Janzen and Giesbrecht, We Recommend, p. 116; cf. GCY, 1930, p. 43; cf. p. 33.

[57] GCY, 1930, p. 33.

[58] Letter from A. A. Janzen, Kafumba, to J. W. Wiens, Hillsboro, September 23, 1930, in A. A. Janzen, "Correspondence and Papers" (unclassified).

itself responsible before the Lord."[59] These "stations" were the Post Oak Mission among the Indians in Oklahoma and four separate stations in India. He went on to remind the Conference of the work in China, pointing out the demise of the South China Mission due to Communist intrusion. He also informed the Conference that a number of MB missionaries had temporarily gone to serve in the KMB mission in Mongolia, as well as other mission agencies in other parts of China. No mention was made in the report of either the work or the missionaries in Africa.[60]

The patient persistence of A. A. Janzen and his missionary team in Kafumba to petition acceptance by the Conference becomes as amazing as the repeated resistance on the part of the Conference to honor that request becomes alarming. In a letter of July 28, 1936, Janzen and three of his co-workers explained mounting pressures from the Belgian authorities, demanding that every missionary must either have the protection of a legitimate registered mission agency, or deposit $350 as a kind of security in a Belgian bank against a refundable travel fund. "Therefore," the letter states, "we would like to ask whether the MB Conference would be willing to grant us that protection." The letter goes on to state that the Kafumba missionaries do not ask for a salary from the Conference, only for official recognition as MB missionaries to satisfy the demands of the government. Janzen even says that they would be prepared to deposit the $350 with the treasury of the Committee for Foreign Mission instead of the Belgian government.[61]

The response of the Committee for Foreign Mission was by now not difficult to predict. "We thank the brothers and sisters for the letter," so the resolution stated, "and covet for them God's blessing in their future work. But the

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[59] GCY, 1933, p. 14.

[60] GCY, 1933, pp. 13-15; cf. pp. 24-25.

[61] Letter from the Kafumba missionaries addressed to the Conference, July 28, 1936, in A. A. Janzen, "Correspondence and Papers" (unclassified).

Conference is not in the position to grant the request for legal protection." The reason for rejecting the petition was (a) that the Belgian government required four male missionaries on each field, which Kafumba did not have at the time; (b) that the mission had to be incorporated both in Belgium and in America, which Kafumba was not; and (c) that, in the event of nonincorporated work, the sending church or agency would have to deposit a substantial sum of money ($350) for each missionary.[62]

It seems that patience had been severely tested, but faith was undergirded by a ray of hope. Thus the Kafumba Mission personnel wrote once more. In their corporate message to the Board of Foreign Missions in 1938, they said:

> As we have fasted and prayed that the Conference might accept our work, the words of Luke 1:45 have come to our minds: "[It] will be accomplished." We know that no one will despair whose trust is in the Lord.
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> It has been our hearts' desire for years, and still is the same today, namely that the conference would take over our work here. First, in order that the work could be expanded; second, that more souls would be won for the Lord; third, that we would not need to be so heavily involved in physical labor to support our work, but could devote ourselves fully to the work of teaching, the ministry among the sick, evangelism, and work among girls.[63]

This was the last appeal. Lohrenz as Secretary-Treasurer responded at once. The tone of the letters from here on is more cordial, fraternal and compassionate than it was heretofore. An unrecorded change in relationships must have taken place.[64] The request was this time brought before the 1939 Convention in Corn, Oklahoma, not only as an item of information, but for action. And the delegates did act without having to search for excuses.

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[62] GCY, 1936, p. 27.

[63] Letter from Kafumba missionaries to the Board of Foreign Missions, December 29, 1938, in A. A. Janzen, "Correspondence and Papers" (unclassified).

[64] See correspondence between H. W. Lohrenz and A. A. Janzen, 1938-1943 in A. A. Janzen, "Correspondence and Papers" (unclassified).

Acceptance of the Kafumba Mission. Once the principal question whether or not to enter Africa had been raised and resolved, the magnitude of the Kafumba issue suddenly seemed to shrink. The Board of Foreign Missions had done its homework and brought the question to a vote in 1939. The delegates of the Convention voted 120 to 159 in favor of acceptance.[65] Although this was constitutionally not a passing vote, negotiations were set in motion because the administration was now behind it. The Kafumba missionaries declared themselves willing to surrender all mission property to the Conference and to work in cooperation with the people of the Bololo Mission in the vicinity, should the Conference decide to accept that mission as well.[66]

The Board of Foreign Missions and the Committee of Reference and Counsel submitted a recommendation to the delegates at the 1943 Convention in Buhler, Kansas, saying,

> (a) that the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America accept as its own the Kafumba Mission in Congo Belge, Africa, with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto, and that it assume the full responsibility for the maintenance and further development thereof. (b) That the Conference accept as its missionaries to Africa those workers who now are laboring on that field or are at home on furlough, namely Brother Aaron A. and Sister Martha Janzen, Sister Kathryn Willems, and Sister Anna Goertzen.[67]

As the vote was taken, all delegates rose to their feet to confirm their acceptance of the Kafumba Mission as a Mennonite Brethren mission field in Africa.

Some critical questions. In retrospect, the Conference position seems to have been inconsistent and is difficult to justify. Even if we take into account that the mission

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[65] GCY, 1939, pp. 24-25; cf. letter of H. W. Lohrenz to the missionaries in Kafumba, November 23, 1939, in A. A. Janzen, "Correspondence and Papers" (unclassified).

[66] Letter of A. A. Janzen to H. W. Lohrenz, June 23, 1939, in A. A. Janzen, "Correspondence and Papers" (unclassified).

[67] Janzen and Giesbrecht, We Recommend, p. 126.

leaders were children of their time, several critical questions must be raised.

1. One of the reasons for rejecting Janzen's request for acceptance in 1919 was lack of information among the constituency about the nature of this work. Why did it take the Committee for Foreign Mission eight years (1919-1927) to inform the local congregations about the Kafumba Mission in order to prepare the delegates for responsible action of the Convention? Why did the Conference again decline the Janzen request in 1930 after the constituency had been informed and the delegates were in the position to cast a responsible vote? Did not the mission have--as the correspondence reflects--"many warm friends and sufficient supporters" in the constituency? Was the real reason for not accepting the Kafumba Mission perhaps more a relational attitude on the part of the administration than lack of information on the part of the delegates?

2. Each time a petition for acceptance was read on the Convention floor, the usual response was to express "goodwill and send greetings to the missionaries" (1919, 1927, 1930, 1936). But was that really an honest response to the actual request of the Kafumba missionaries? While the Janzens expressed appreciation and rejoiced "in every kind of support and assistance" they received from their "brothers and sisters in the Lord," did the Conference really feel that it had exhausted administrative resources to meet the deepest need of the Kafumba Mission, which was structural and relational?

3. At the 1924 and 1933 Conventions there was evidently no direct request from the Kafumba Mission to the Conference. Was that sufficient reason for total silence about the issue on the part of the Committee for Foreign Missions? Would not a genuine spirit of goodwill have given more substance than mere rhetoric in response to the needs in Kafumba? Was the reason for total silence on the part of mission leaders the fact that this time there was no letter from A. A. Janzen to provoke their conscience to a response?

4. The resolution of the 1936 Convention is more puzzling than any other. Somehow the Conference rationale for its responses to the Kafumba Mission is not entirely convincing and appears more like excuse than reason. Why, for instance, list the sum of money to be deposited to the Belgian government as a reason for not taking missionaries under Conference protection in 1936? Did not the missionaries explicitly state that they would supply that refundable sum of money for the Mission Treasury rather than deposit it in a Belgian bank?

5. So far all the issues have revolved around peripheral matters. But what were the real reasons for not accepting the Kafumba Mission as a Conference project for nearly thirty years? Were the mission executives and Conference delegates really that uncompassionate? Were they through their indecisions or wrong decisions subjecting the missionaries to psychological stress, structural crises, spiritual struggles, and physical hardships? It appears that an underlying issue was the inability to establish constructive relationships with people who had gone independent routes and thereby caused dissension. At least that appeared to be the reason for delay in building relationships with the pioneer missionaries in China. It appears that the case in Africa fell prey to the same judgment.

6. In all fairness to the mission administrators of the time, I want to point out that their chief concern was unity of the Conference and its mission endeavors. That was clearly the issue for H. W. Lohrenz at the 1939 Convention. That is why he recommended the acceptance of Kafumba, and soon thereafter of other projects. But did it never occur either to him or to any other of the leaders that the independent mission efforts, especially those that appealed to the Conference for acceptance, were much less a threat than a challenge to real unity? This possibility seems to have dawned on Lohrenz sometime between 1936 and 1939. Thereafter he pursued acceptance vigorously.

7. Finally, there is a question that is basic to all others: had the Conference in principle ever made an

intentional and official decision to enter Africa as a mission field? The records indicate that it had not. This had also been the issue with the South China Mission until 1919. The members of the Committee for Foreign Mission should have known this and learned from their experience with the South China Mission. Evidently, they did not see this particular parallel between the China Mission and the Kafumba Mission. Other parallels on a more superficial level--such as finances and independence--seemed to have dulled their perception for the basic issues.

The Case of the Bololo Mission

In connection with the Western Children's Mission described briefly in Chapter 8, I pointed out the vigorous missionary spirit among Mennonite Brethren young people in Canada. The Afrika Missions-Verein was evidence of that movement; and, like the South China and the Kafumba Mission, this was a manifestation of missionary vision which was broader than that of the denomination in whose bosom it was born and nurtured.

Heinrich Bartsch and the Afrika Missions-Verein. As the case of the South China Mission cannot be understood without some historical reference to the China Mennonite Mission Society, and as the Kafumba Mission had its structural roots in the Congo Inland Mission, so is the Bololo Mission indissolubly tied to the Afrika Missions-Verein, with Heinrich and Anna Bartsch as its first missionaries.

There was a direct cause and effect from one independent mission event to the other. Frank and Agnes Wiens of the South China Mission were stirred to action by the reports of the H. C. Bartels from the China Mennonite Mission Society; Aaron and Ernestina Janzen were inspired to mission in Africa by the sacrificial example of Heinrich and Maria Enns, who laid down their lives for the Baptist Mission in Cameroon; Heinrich and Anna Bartsch were called from the wheat farm in Dalmeny, Saskatchewan, to the mission field in Bololo of what was then the Belgian Congo, because they

heard Aaron Janzen report in churches what God was doing through the Kafumba Mission in Africa.

Bartsch was profoundly shaken by what he heard. At 10 o'clock one morning he came home from harvesting grain in 1930, sat down in the kitchen and said to his wife: "I cannot go on any longer. Here we so comfortably sit while over yonder the heathen die benighted in their sins. I have often been close to death, but the Lord has spared my life." He paused for a moment and then added emphatically, "But I am no longer alone. I cannot go, Anna, unless you are going with me." The fact was that she had the same calling to mission as he.[68] Both were prepared to go to Africa, no matter what the cost. But the price they paid was higher than they had anticipated.

Bartsch discussed his plans with the Committee for Foreign Mission, but was turned down. He was encouraged to visit the churches in the interest of mission, but forbidden to collect funds. They had many similar disappointments during months of preparation. On March 13, 1931, the Bartsches left Winnipeg in Canada for Bololo in the Congo. They travelled over New York and Hamburg. Ten months later, on January 12, 1932, they arrived at the Aaron Janzen's home at the Kafumba Mission. They spent a year there and in April of 1933 reached their destiny, Bololo. There was the Dengese tribe of some 35,000 people among whom they were going to serve as independent missionaries in the Dekese territory. The Bartsches were accompanied by Wilhelm and Eva Jantz, and by two single missionaries, Lydia Mantz and Katharina Harder, all from the Kafumba Mission.[69]

Just as the Janzens in Kafumba, so were the Bartsches in Bololo: no conference or denomination, no mission board

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[68] Bartsch, Die verborgene Hand, p. 62.

[69] Bartsch, Die verborgene Hand, pp. 64-104; cf. correspondence between Bartsch and H. W. Lohrenz, November 28, 1930 to December 26, 1944, in Heinrich Bartsch, "Correspondence"; Cornelius J. Funk, "Die Entstehung des Afrika-Missions-Verein," Der Kleine Afrika-Bote 2 (April 1937), 9-11; Toews, Zaire, p. 68. The name of the new society was usually written "Afrika Missions-Verein."

or congregation stood behind them; they were completely on their own, trusting God to supply their basic needs. He did by using human instruments. Students, teachers, and the Missionary Prayer Band of the Winkler Bible School decided to support the Bartsches in Africa. "We are obligated," they said, "to support with all our strength those who have gone out from among us as a sacrifice to the Lord whom they want to serve."[70]

In the summer of 1932, a small group of students and a few friends met in the home of Bible school teacher Gerhard Reimer, prayed for the Bartsches, and gave shape to the "Afrika Missions Komitee" which shortly thereafter was incorporated as "Afrika-Missions-Verein." Its initial purpose was twofold: (a) to support with prayers and donations the work of Brother and Sister Bartsch in Africa, and (b) to promote and nurture interest in this work within MB communities.[71] In June 1936, the Verein launched its official organ, Der kleine Afrika-Bote, a monthly publication which kept the constituency informed about the work in Africa until its demise in August 1943, when the mission was accepted as a Conference project.

Fruit of relational tensions. As strange as it may seem, the Afrika Missions-Verein was actually the result--not the cause--of existing tensions. Such an assertion demands an explanation.

For one thing, the vision of the founders and supporters of the Verein was much wider than that of the Committee for Foreign Mission under the Conference. Such an aggressive spirit was perceived as a threat by the conference leaders.

Furthermore, the emergence of the Verein was generated by the missionary dynamics characteristic of the new Mennonite Brethren who had come from Russia to Canada. Such dynamics could, paradoxically, neither be contained within

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[70] Funk, "Die Entstehung," p. 10.

[71] Funk, "Die Entstehung," p. 10; cf. Toews, Zaire, p. 60.

the bounds of the Conference structures, which were largely dominated by the Brethren in the older churches of the United States, nor be enthusiastically endorsed by them.

Moreover, the Conference machinery was too slow to harness the driving force of youth with vision. "There was a sense of missionary urgency about the movement, and a commitment to personal responsibility for a lost world . . . that could not function within the slower moving, corporate function of a conference."[72]

Finally, there was the critical issue of exclusion from action. Toews's observation is noteworthy.

> For more than a decade after the mass migration of Mennonite Brethren people from Russia to Canada, none of the Russian Mennonite young people interested in missions abroad had been considered for an assignment by the conference [Committee for Foreign Mission] Board of Missions, nor did they have any representative on this Board. The Africa Mission Society was thus an answer to their exclusion from active participation in the existing program of the brotherhood.[73]

Uniqueness of the Afrika Missions-Verein. Although the Afrika Missions-Verein had many things in common with other independent MB mission endeavors during the first half of the twentieth century, it was nonetheless unique in several ways.

First, the board of directors of the Verein viewed their organization as provisional and temporary. According to A. E. Janzen, it was the intent of the Verein from the outset to amalgamate as soon as possible with the Committee for Foreign Mission or some other Conference agency within the MB brotherhood that would be willing to assume responsibility for its ministries.[74] As I pointed out in connection with the Kafumba Mission, one of the conditions of doing missionary work in

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[72] Toews, Zaire, p. 60.

[73] Toews, Zaire, p. 61.

[74] A. E. Janzen, "The Development of Missionary Dynamic Among the American Mennonite Brethren," in The Church in Mission: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to J. B. Toews, ed. A. J. Klassen (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1967), p. 162.

the Belgian Congo was legal incorporation of the agency that was sponsoring missionaries in colonial territory. Thus the board of directors seriously tried to integrate the Verein with existing MB mission structures. "But all attempts failed," wrote its director H. H. Janzen, and "we were formally pressured to a decision which led to legal incorporation of the Verein on November 19, 1935.[75]

Second, the Verein was a pioneer venture. It was the first structure of its kind in the Canadian MB Churches and emerged at a time when the missionary spirit was most active among those who had recently come from Russia to make their home in Canada. In a sense, the Verein was a missionary pathfinder, making it easier for subsequent mission endeavors such as, for example, the Western Children's Mission. And, like the Western Children's Mission, the Afrika Missions-Verein was born in the Bible school movement of the Canadian MB Churches.

Third, the Verein generated its own publication, Der kleine Afrika-Bote. It was the only mission monthly of its kind circulating in Canadian churches and became a powerful promotional tool for the organization. Its name was wisely chosen: it was a Bote, or messenger in the true sense of the word, regularly bringing news from the Bololo mission to the members of the Verein, and through the Verein into the homes and churches of the constituency. It informed, inspired, and motivated people to celebrate what God was doing through the missionaries in Africa.[76]

Finally, the uniqueness of this particular mission must also be assessed by its outcome. Unlike the Kafumba Mission and other independent MB mission endeavors, the Bololo Mission never developed into a Mennonite Brethren Church. In fact, the work was discontinued in the 1950s and all

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[75] H. H. Janzen, "Ein Wort zur Einführung," a dedicatory editorial of the first issue of Der kleine Afrika-Bote 1 (June 1936), 2.

[76] Cf. Janzen, "Ein Wort," pp. 1-2.

relationships to the Mennonite Brethren Church were severed. Yet it profoundly reflects a phase in MB mission thinking that cannot be ignored. J. B. Toews has captured the nature of it rather well when he writes:

> The spiritual dynamic reflected in the commitment and sincerity of the missionaries to the Basonge-Meno, their missionary approach, characterized by a supernaturalistic faith, their evangelistic communication with little or no regard for the cultural and social background of the people, and a willingness to move ahead in the face of human impossibilities, cannot be passed over.[77]

The Bololo Mission and the Afrika Missions-Verein throw a special ray of light on Mennonite Brethren understanding of mission in terms of philosophy, strategy, and methodology, as well as on fraternal relationships between official and provisional structures.

Integrating the Bololo Mission with the Conference. As I have pointed out, the Afrika Missions-Verein viewed itself as an auxiliary agency with a specific mandate at a given time in history. Although the integration process was set in motion quite early in the mission's history, official negotiations were finally completed in 1943 when the mission was accepted as a Conference project. A summary statement reads:

> The Africa Mission Society, through its Board of Directors, has presented to the Board of Foreign Missions several communications dated November, 1936, October, 1938, and March 11, 1943. In these they likewise petition that the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America take over the Bololo Mission, and they declare further that they are willing to transfer the mission to the conference under certain conditions. Or if this can not [sic] be arranged satisfactorily, they ask for the establishment of a basis upon which they can function side by side with the existing mission organization of the conference.[78]

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[77] Toews, Zaire, p. 57.

[78] Janzen and Giesbrecht, We Recommend, p. 127; cf. GCY, 1943, p. 25.

This document clearly implies serious relational tensions between the Verein and the Board of Foreign Missions: (a) The Verein was willing either to transfer the mission and integrate on its own terms; or (b) to work out a cooperative basis to work side by side with the recently accepted Conference (Kafumba) mission in Africa. The Board of Foreign Missions cautiously but firmly responded with a recommendation that the Mennonite Brethren "declare their willingness to accept the Bololo Mission on the same basis and for the same purpose as the Kafumba Mission."[79]

The ensuing debates on the Convention floor were prolonged and vigorous until H. H. Janzen as chairman of the Verein said that the members were "ready to turn over the Bololo field unconditionally to the conference as recommended by the Board of Foreign Missions." This was followed by a motion "that the M.B. Conference of North America accept the Bololo mission from the African Mission Society and thereby overtake [sic!] full responsibility for this field."[80]

As strange as it may seem, there is no record that the above motion was ever acted upon. Whether it was simply an error of protocol or an oversight on the part of the recorder of minutes is not clear. What is clear, however, is that the Conference chairman assumed that the Bololo Mission was now a Conference project. For as he called two brethren to the platform for prayer, he instructed them "to thank God for the fields in Africa that we [the Conference] could accept them [and] to earnestly ask God to guide and direct in this work and bless it mightily."[81]

The Role of Lohrenz in Building Relationships

Henry W. Lohrenz became the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Committee for Foreign Mission in 1919, a position he held for seventeen years. In 1936 he assumed the

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[79] GCY, 1943, p. 25.

[80] GCY, 1943, p. 27.

[81] GCY, 1943, p. 28.

dual office of Secretary-Treasurer, which he occupied until his death in 1945. This was a time when the Conference mission experienced some of the most intense relational crises in its entire history.

Identifying Problems of Relationship

The Mennonite Brethren have gone through three identifiable eras of relationships in mission, each facing its own peculiar set of problems.

The first period was from its beginning until 1896. The major problem was lodged in tensions between the Brethren and the Baptists. It finally reached a climax at the 1896 Convention in Ebenfeld, Kansas, when the Brethren resolved to begin their own foreign mission work and sever ties with the Baptists.[82]

The second phase was initiated in 1909 at the Convention in Henderson, Nebraska, when the China question resulted in a lively discussion and the Frank Wienses were turned down as missionaries to China. Their decision to go out as independent missionaries was only the beginning of a relational struggle with a series of other independent ventures that lasted until 1945.[83]

The third phase began after World War II and had to do with a new set of problems relating to the younger churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as I will show later in this chapter.

There was also an overarching relational problem common to all three periods, having to do with relationships between mission administration and missionaries, as well as between the administration and the supporting constituency. My focus here will be mainly on the second period, in which Lohrenz was primary architect of mission policies and chief

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[82] GCY, 1896, pp. 13-18; see above Chapter 9, p. 358 and this chapter, pp. 519-521.

[83] See above, pp. 531-533.

proponent of building relationships.[84]

Shaping a Platform for Action

Two issues weighed most heavily upon Lohrenz during his long tenure as mission administrator. One was the sensitive issue of building and maintaining relationships with self-determined characters who spearheaded such independent mission endeavors as I have described in the first part of this chapter. The second issue was related to the first and had to do with maintaining Conference unity despite an evident spirit of interdenominationalism and erosion of Conference loyalty within the MB constituency. How could these concerns be resolved in a redemptive manner?

> When the missionary spirit within the Mennonite Brethren churches aggressively searched for an outlet of service, there emerged the danger of divisiveness within the Conference. In his prudent farsightedness professor H. W. Lohrenz expressed the fact that it had become essential to coordinate and integrate the missionary endeavors of the Conference.[85]

Those perceptive words of A. H. Unruh accurately reflect both the MB spirit of the time and the burden of Lohrenz.

Lohrenz recognized that the work of the Lord could neither be performed according to a simple mode, as some brethren seemed to believe, nor could it be contained in a straitjacket, as others appeared to imply. On the contrary, the Lord called men and women here and there and sent them to mission fields without Conference approval. That was how the work in China, Belgian Congo, Colombia, and Brazil had been started. But was it right for Mennonite Brethren missionaries to work either independently or serve with nondenominational endeavors? If they did, could they be allowed to report in Mennonite Brethren congregations,

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84 See Hans Kasdorf, "H. W. Lohrenz and Mennonite Brethren Mission," a paper presented at the Lohrenz Symposium, Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California, 1983. Most of this section is based on that paper, pp. 17-22.

85 A. H. Unruh, Die Geschichte der Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde (Winnipeg: The Christian Press, 1955), p. 795.

collect funds, and recruit personnel while the work of the Conference mission was suffering from inadequate resources? These questions had been gnawing in his mind for years. He believed that the time had come to construct and carry out a radically new shape of mission.[86]

How deeply Lohrenz felt about coordination, concentration, and integration of all phases of mission efforts related to Mennonite Brethren support is reflected in his commitment to what he called "eine geheiligte Konzentration," or a holy concentration, in the sense of centralization.[87] He enjoyed a high degree of confidence within the brotherhood. When he made a proposal, it usually found support. He believed, therefore, that the 1936 Conference resolution to unite the hitherto two separate offices of the mission secretary and the mission treasurer into one secretary-treasurer was a step in the right direction. "There should be a central office," he said, "where all business transactions can flow together." Only then could unified direction and action be carried out. But he reminded the Conference that this move toward centralization would involve time and energy, requiring full-time attention of the person in charge. This would also mean increased financial obligation on the part of the Conference.[88]

Added to internal disunity in mission, there were a host of stress factors to which nonconference missionaries were unduly exposed. Among those most readily identifiable were lack of identity, a feeling of insecurity, a sense of isolation, and a loss of direction on the part of independent missionaries not under Conference protection and supervision. Such stresses surfaced repeatedly in the three cases described earlier in this chapter. The reason for that becomes even clearer when seen in the larger context of

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[86] H. W. Lohrenz, "Probleme im Betrieb der Heidenmission," Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, 1937-1943, pp. 2-8.

[87] Lohrenz, "Probleme," p. 13.

[88] Lohrenz, "Probleme," pp. 13-14.

mission history. Bona fide mission organizations of the time were registered under the so-called "Comity Agreement," which not only defined the designated geographical, ethnic, and linguistic working area for a given mission, but also provided a measure of legal protection against intrusion by unscrupulous rivals and competitive mission organizations.[89] Independent Mennonite Brethren missionaries had no guarantee of any protection whatever, either from the government or from a church.

Forging Operational Principles

In response to this twofold problem, Lohrenz drafted a document in which he clearly outlined twelve guiding principles as a basis for entering a Schutzverhältnis or a protective agreement, a kind of fraternal relationship with independent Mennonite Brethren and other mission organizations. The most essential elements of these principles are summarized here.

First, the biblical foundation. Every mission endeavor that sought to enter a protective agreement with the Conference had to subscribe fully to the biblical foundations of faith as outlined in the Confession of Faith of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

Second, the negotiating process. As soon as an application was received, it was to become the responsibility of the Board of Foreign Missions to study and negotiate the conditions of acceptance. In the event that a single mission station from another mission sought Mennonite Brethren sponsorship, all details had to be worked out with the existing station.

Third, property liquidation. Upon reaching an agreement the applying mission had to be fully dissolved and all its property (except that of the missionaries) turned over to the Mennonite Brethren Conference.

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[89] R. Pierce Beaver, "Comity," A Concise Dictionary of Christian World Mission, eds. Stephen Neill, Gerald H. Anderson, and John Goodwin (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 123.

Fourth, acceptance of personnel. This area demanded most crucial consideration, pertaining to such matters as conversion, discipleship, relationship to others, adequate financial support, proven usefulness in the kingdom of God, good health, and a strong recommendation from the home church. The Board of Foreign Missions was to reserve the prerogative to make the final decision as to whether or not certain candidates who came under the protection agreement should be ordained or not.

Fifth, administrative arrangements. All missionaries who were sent out under the Schutzverhältnis policy should agree to contribute a small percentage of their salary to administrative costs. They might, in turn, visit Mennonite Brethren churches in America in order to collect funds to meet their needs. These missionaries were also to be encouraged to contribute regular reports to the Zionsbote for constituency information.

Sixth, church relations. Any organization--be that a small mission society or a group of supporting churches--that entered the Schutzverhältnis with the Mennonite Brethren was to assume responsibility to promote mission interest, make regular contributions to the cause of mission, and welcome both visiting missionaries and mission board members.[90]

When Lohrenz presented these operational principles of mission expansion to the General Conference in Reedley in 1939, they met with full approval. Reflecting on the Reedley meetings and on the central position which the Board of Foreign Missions had been given within the Conference during the latter part of the Lohrenz tenure, one reporter filed the following commentary.

> The growing extent of the conference mission program, the necessity of the times for making prompt administrative decisions in dealing with governments and foreign countries, the greater responsibilities

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[90] H. W. Lohrenz, "Ein neues Missionsproject" (1936, in Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, 1937-1943.

> demanded of administrating boards, made it imperative to concentrate the administration of foreign missions in a Board which, though responsible to the Conference, nevertheless needed to enjoy sufficient authority to give executive direction to the great work of foreign missions the Lord [had] entrusted to our brotherhood.[91]

Although it was in the midst of World War II, the 1943 General Conference in Buhler was a high point for Mennonite Brethren mission in general and for H. W. Lohrenz in particular. The chairman of the Board announced to the Conference that the Board of Foreign Missions had elected Lohrenz to serve as its first full-time Executive Secretary, receiving full financial support as an executive of Mennonite Brethren mission work.[92]

Acting as Conciliation Agent

I have already alluded to evident change of spirit and attitude in Lohrenz's administration between 1939 and 1943. Unfortunately, there is no recorded evidence to substantiate that such a change actually did occur, except that he suddenly saw issues in a positive light and put forth a great deal of effort toward unification and reconciliation in a divided camp.

Much hard work, strategic planning, and careful negotiations on the part of Lohrenz resulted in the acceptance of three mission fields as Conference projects.

1. The Kafumba Mission. When Lohrenz became chairman of the Committee for Foreign Mission in 1919, the A. A. Janzens presented their first appeal for acceptance as a Conference mission. Although they had repeated their request several times, the reply had always been negative, except for accompanying words of encouragement.[93]

2. The Bololo Mission. This was perhaps the most significant step toward unification at the time. It meant

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[91] Janzen and Giesbrecht, We Recommend, p. 121.

[92] GCY, 1943, p. 7.

[93] Cf. GCY, 1919, p. 23; 1927, pp. 33 and 35; 1930, pp. 32-33; 1936, pp. 27-28; 1943, pp. 27-28.

dissolution of the small and struggling independent Afrika Missions-Verein which was within the Conference, of the Conference, but not under the Conference, and, therefore, a strange obstacle to unity. This move also enlarged Conference work and responsibility. But even more important was that now for the first time the Conference recognized (at least implicitly so) the mission efforts of their Canadian brothers and sisters who had come from Russia in the 1920s. Thus this move can be viewed as an act of reconciliation as much as unification.[94]

3. The South China Mission. This was accepted for the second time. It had earlier (1919) become a Conference work, but in the course of history, church-mission relationships had been strained to the point of breakage.[95]

Under Lohrenz's mediating efforts, healing and unification took place on long-range projections. A closer relationship with the mission work of the Mennonites in Paraguay was established and support allocated.[96] This move opened the eyes of the churches in North America to mission opportunities through their brothers in the south. Lohrenz wrote about South America, "Although we cannot yet direct our young people to a definite place on this great continent, we are asking God for specific guidance if He wishes that we enter and occupy a field there."[97]

Lohrenz was also instrumental in preparing the way for accepting the so-called Bartel Mission in the Shantung and

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[94] All members of the Board of Foreign Missions had thus far not only been predominantly from the U.S. side of the Conference, but exclusively of earlier 19th century immigrants who were now second-generation Americans. Their Canadian counterpart of the brotherhood was involved in mission mainly by proxy. The tensions between the earlier and later immigrants from Russia were only gradually overcome.

[95] GCY, 1919, pp. 19-20; 1936, pp. 27-28; 1943, p. 27.

[96] GCY, 1943, p. 29.

[97] GCY, 1943, p. 21. Cf. Janzen and Giesbrecht, We Recommend, p. 124.

Kansu provinces of Northern China. At the 1912 Convention in Hillsboro, a decision had been reached which not only denied Mennonite Brethren voting privileges in the Bartel Mission; it also refused to grant the Mission collecting privileges in the churches.[98] In view of these Conference actions and subsequent rather delicate negotiations,[99] one cannot help but marvel how God's Spirit was able to break down seemingly insurmountable biases and barriers through the ecumenical and conciliatory spirit of Lohrenz's leadership, resulting in strong relational ties on various levels of Mennonite Brethren mission prior to 1945.[100]

Documentary Relationship Rhetoric

The Mennonite Brethren deserve to be commended for being at least fifteen years ahead of such Evangelical mission organizations as the EFMA and IFMA, and less than a decade behind the International Missionary Council in clarifying their Conference relationships to the younger churches. I should also point out that the question of relationships in mission embraces much more than simply church-mission relations; it touches also more personal aspects. For relationships are built neither on broad institutional bases nor on theory alone, though theories may enhance our understanding of the principles involved in both types of behavior. And, I might add, the nature of interpersonal behavior is basic to all types of practical relationship levels, be they personal or institutional.

While the official documents treat more the institutional dimensions of relationships in mission, such Mennonite Brethren missiologists as Paul G. Hiebert, Jacob A. Loewen, and G. W. Peters have also given considerable attention to

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98 GCY, 1912, pp. 22-24.

99 GCY, 1924, pp. 35-36; 1933, p. 25.

100 GCY, 1945, p. 24.

the personal and practical dimensions at various levels.[101] Although I will here focus primarily on the Conference position, it must be said that the insights and writings of these men have helped to shape that position, particularly as it has been articulated since the 1960s. What may remain disconcerting is that neither the structural nor the relational struggles can be totally resolved. Perhaps that is as it should be, lest the present generation rely on the accomplishment of the past and lose challenge and vision for the future.

Statements of Principles and Policies

These documents are the official statements dealing with relationships. There are six such documents in existence. The first two were drafted by H. W. Lohrenz and approved by the Board of Foreign Missions in 1936 and 1942.[102] The other

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[101] Hiebert's "Study Guide" in Peters' Foundations (pp. 169-186) is of special value in formulating a Mennonite Brethren theology of relationships in mission. See also the chapter on "The Bicultural Bridge" in his new book, Anthropological Insights for Missionaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), pp. 227-253. Jacob A. Loewen's brilliant contributions have also had a formulative influence on a host of contemporary missionaries, mission administrators, and mission thinkers throughout the world. Some of his most important writings on MB relationships in mission are: "Reciprocity in Identification," Practical Anthropology 11 (July-August 1964), 145-160; "The Social Context of Guilt and Forgiveness," Practical Anthropology 17 (March-April 1970), 80-96; "A Mennonite Encounter with the 'Innermost' of the Lengua Indians," Mennonite Quarterly Review 39 (January 1965), 40-67; cf. Jacob A. Loewen and Anne Loewen, "The Missionary Role," Practical Anthroplogy 14 (September-October 1967), 193-208. In his Foundations Peters has traced the shifts and changes in Mennonite Brethren church/mission relationships (pp. 74-84, 129-142). See also G. W. Peters, "Mission/Church Relations Overseas," in Missions in Creative Tension, ed. Vergil Gerber (Pasadena: William Carey, 1971), pp. 189-230; Hiebert, "Social Structure and Church Growth," in Crucial Dimensions, pp. 61-74.

[102] See "Ein neues Missionsproject," October 22, 1936 on file with Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, 1937-1943, p. 42; also "Principles for the Extension of Mission Work," Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, September 15, 1942, pp. 90-92.

four were published by the Board in 1947, 1961, 1963, and 1977 and approved by the Conference when submitted.[103]

Statements prior to 1945. The independent mission organizations and the general trend for independent rather than corporate action within the Conference caused the Brethren deep concern, particularly in the area of mission. The extent to which the Board of Foreign Missions agonized over this issue is reflected in its minutes from 1936 to 1943. There was no board meeting during these years in which the relationship of the Board to the independent mission organizations and their missionaries did not occupy the major portion of the discussion.[104] Thus it is not surprising that the first official documents of principles had to do with relationships of the Board of Foreign Missions to such independent mission endeavors as the South China Mission, the Kafumba Mission, and the Bololo Mission discussed earlier.

The concerns expressed by the Board were theological, financial, and personal in character. The Conference declared itself willing to enter protective relationship with the new missions, provided (a) that they were in full accord with biblical teaching as expressed in the American Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith; (b) that they would be prepared to operate their missions under the supervision of the Conference represented by the Board of Foreign Missions; (c) that they would neither become a financial burden to the Conference and thereby hinder the work in India and among Indians in America, nor exploit MB churches financially,

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103 Foreign Missions: Guiding Principles and Field Policies (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Foreign Missions [1947]); Guiding Principles and Policies of Mennonite Brethren Church Missions, 2nd and 3rd eds. (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Missions, 1960 and 1963); Paul G. Hiebert, Mission Principles and Policies of the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Missions/ Services, 1977).

104 See Committee for Foreign Mission, Agenda and Minutes, 1936, p. 41; also the special document, "Ein Neues Missionsproject," October 22, 1936; Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, 1937-1943, p. 42.

though they could accept free gifts; (d) that the missions dissolve their existing organizations, turn all properties over to the Board of Foreign Missions, and enter a five-year trial contract, after which each party would be free to decide whether a permanent relationship would be advantageous for both.[105] Beyond that, the document said nothing about relationships to younger churches or to mission personnel. The tone of the document seemed defensive and demanding.

The 1942 document clearly reflected a profound attitudinal and relational transformation on the part of the administration. "There exists within the Mennonite Brethren Church much interest in mission," said the document. The Board of Foreign Missions declared its willingness to promote and consolidate that interest. The third clause of section one stated:

> Present trends under the coercion of existing world conditions tend toward greater union of efforts for the extension of God's kingdom here on earth. The hope is entertained that these principles may also serve to lead to closer affiliation of such churches, mission societies, and other similar bodies that are closely related by their faith, practice, and history.[106]

The object was to enter a relationship of cooperation with other missions, in the hope that they would eventually come under the Conference umbrella. The document delineated detailed principles governing missionary life and relationships and spoke specifically to finances:

> Each affiliated mission society has the right to maintain its own treasury and administer its funds. However, it shall always be the policy of the treasurer of the Board of Foreign Missions to give such assistance as may be desired and is within his means. If desired, funds may be transmitted through the Board's treasury.[107]

Curiously, however, the relationship of the sending churches and the younger churches was evidently not a concern

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[105] Lohrenz, "Ein Neues Missionsproject," 1936; Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, 1937-1943, p. 42.

[106] "Principles for Extension," Board of Foreign Missions, Agenda and Minutes, 1942, p. 90.

[107] "principles for Extension," p. 92.

prior to--even during--World War II. That concern came only gradually after the dismantling of the Colonial Era was set in motion by the "Retreat of the West" in 1947.[108] Up to that point, the Board of Foreign Missions could rely on the Committee of Missionaries or the Field Council to handle the total modus operandi of the national church. Thus the structural relationship between the sending Conference and the younger churches depended entirely on the Field Council, which functioned as a liaison by representing the churches' needs and conditions to the Board of Foreign Missions and the wishes and decisions of the Board to the churches on the field.[109]

After World War II, however, the mission board issued four policy statements in which it sought to express its operational principles and structural relationships.

Guiding principles and field policies of 1947. This document shows only minor changes in relationships from those in force prior to 1945. One change was expressed in the advisability of organizing the churches of a mission station area into an Association of Churches of that respective field. Such an association should then function as a channel for transferring increased responsibility for the work to the indigenous churches.

Another change, related to the first, was the vision for organizing a "Conference of the Indigenous Church." It should embrace all local churches and associations in a given country, and be "patterned somewhat after the organization of the General or the District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church in the homeland."

The Field Council also underwent changes. Whereas up to this point it had consisted only of missionaries, it was now

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108 See Ralph D. Winter, The 25 Unbelievable Years, 1945-1969 (Pasadena: William Carey, 1970), pp. 11-20.

109 Konstitution der Konferenz der Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde von Nord Amerika ([Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House], 1936), p. 21.

to include representatives from the indigenous church, and was given a threefold task by the Board of Foreign Missions: (a) to promote and maintain a cooperative relationship between the mission agency and the indigenous church; (b) to strengthen and nurture the growing young church, and (c) to assign increasing responsibility to the national church.[110]

The members of the Board of Foreign Missions were aware of the need for structural alterations. At the same time, however, there was an implicit sense of uncertainty--if not fear--as to the potential impact such changes might have on the missionary enterprise of the Mennonite Brethren. Therefore, the 1947 Guiding Principles and Policies still reflect the colonial spirit of vesting control and authority in the sending mission agency rather than in either the Field Council or the young church.

Guiding Principles and Policies of 1961. Here the Board of Missions took a giant leap in relational structures. Whereas in 1947 the Board was obviously in control of everything that happened on the field, the new issue of Policies expressed much greater confidence in the national church and placed more responsibility on the missionaries. Although the missionary was encouraged to offer the necessary guidance and assistance in the initial stages of church organization, he/she was also cautioned "to avoid the influence of a foreign culture upon the development of the national church" so that the church could be fully "established in its own culture." The missionary was to be guided by "the Biblical pattern [which] was proven sufficient for all time and places and does not prescribe any particular organizational form of operation." Such organization, the document went on to say, would be based "on fellowship and mutual counsel," would be simple in nature, would function "with a minimum of centralized authority," and would operate on the Three-Selves Formula "with powers of self-government," with elected

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110 Guiding Principles, 1947. All short quotations between notes #108 and #110 in the text are from p. 22 of this document.

leaders who would be self-supporting, and have a missionary drive of "witnessing and self-propagation" (1 Cor. 16:9; Rom. 16:19; 1 Cor. 14:23-40; 1 Tim. 3; 2 Tim. 4:1-2).[111]

The thinking behind these policy statements is instructive for us today. The document of 1947 described the missionary role as permanent, saying that "the need for 'fathers in Christ' among the believers of the church on a mission field will always remain," and the missionary should endeavor to fill this need, even after "the indigenous church becomes self-sustaining."[112] The document of 1961 moved in a very different direction. It stated that both "missionaries and the mission program are a means to an end and must be looked upon as temporary in the building of a national church."[113]

The missionaries' primary task was evangelism and the building of a strong church with its own leadership. As soon as that was happening, the missionaries should deliberately seek "to implant in the church in the early stage of its development the consciousness of the unity of a larger brotherhood."[114] The rationale for such an objective was the vision of an international Mennonite Brethren Church both organizationally and spiritually (Figure 14).[115]

Several aspects of this organizational relationship shown in the diagram of 1960/61 are noteworthy. (a) The legislative power of the Conference, the Board of Missions, and the Missionary Fellowship or Field Council were confined to the American constituency. (b) The national church's legislative authority was exercised by the Governing Council and its Administrative Committee. The Advisory Council, made up of the chairmen of the different departments of the

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[111] Guiding Principles, 1961, p. 8.

[112] Guiding Principles, 1947, pp. 22-23.

[113] Guiding Principles, 1961, p. 6.

[114] Guiding Principles, 1961, p. 9.

[115] Slightly modified from Guiding Principles, 1961, p. 11; GCY, 1960, p. 47.

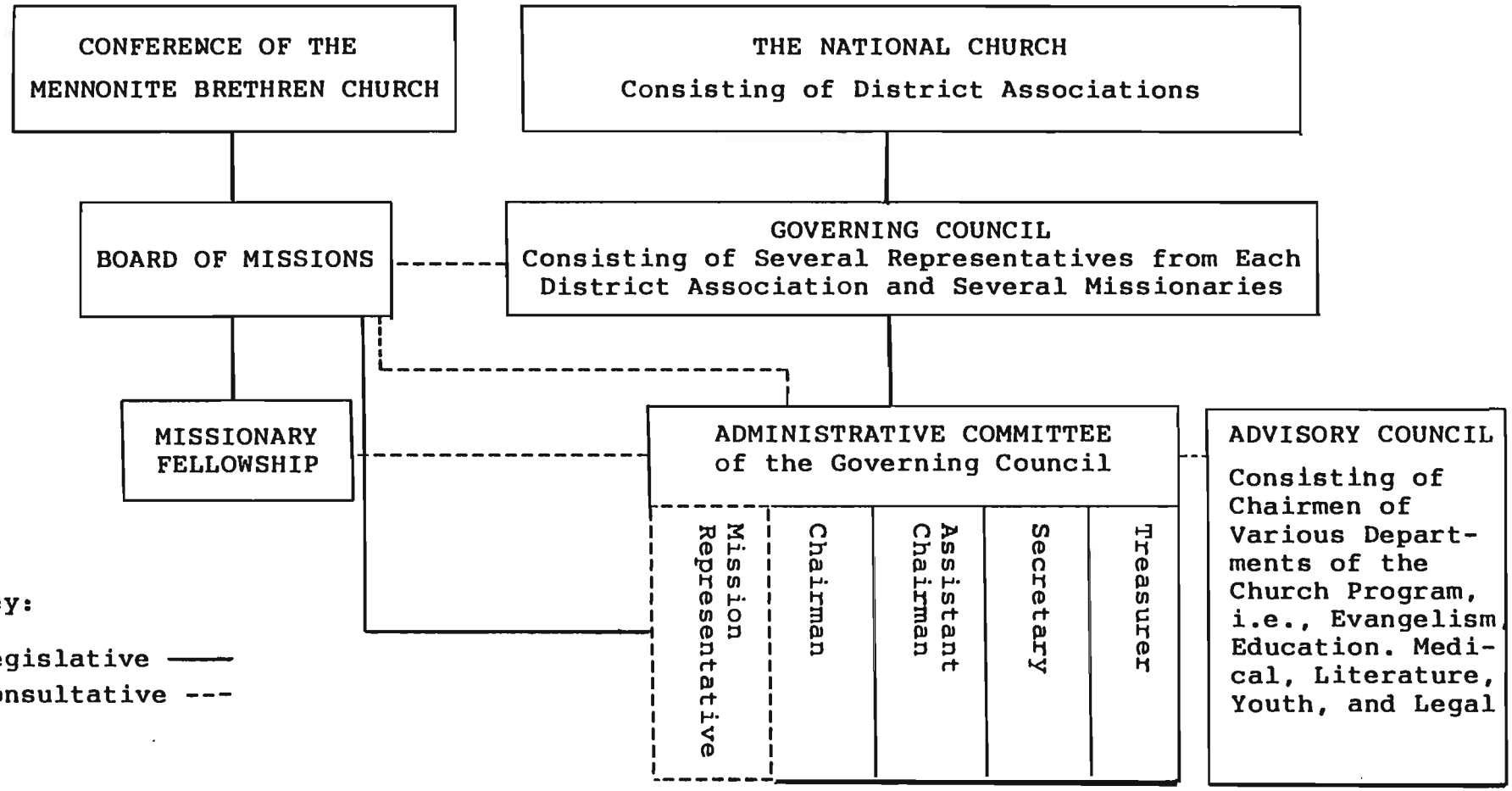

Figure 14

Organizational Relationship of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church with National Churches Abroad as Conceived in 1960

Source: GCY, 1960, p. 47, and Guiding Principles, 1961, p. 11.

church program, was restricted to consultative services with no legislative power. (c) The Board of Missions assumed the prerogative to exercise indirect legislation within the national church by having "several missionaries" as its representatives in the Governing Council and a mission representative on the Administrative Committee.

Guiding Principles and Policies of 1963. The importance of this edition lay more in revisions of administrative character than in changes basic to philosophy and strategy of mission.[116] The structural lines of relationship drawn in the 1961 edition appeared in identical form in the 1963 edition. It also appears that the organizational ties were strongly suggested--if not imposed--by the mission executives rather than initiated and forged by national church leaders. The rhetoric of the 1963 Policies supports this observation:

> [1] A national church which has reached the stage of self-sufficiency in operational organization, is advised to apply for membership in the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church and assume its respective positions as a sister church in the organization of the larger brotherhood.
>
> [2] A national church in any part of the world desiring to join the Mennonite Brethren conference and accept the status of a sister church in the larger brotherhood must formally adopt the Confession of Faith of the Mennonite Brethren Conference and subscribe to its Biblical principles and policies.
>
> [3] The national church makes formal application to be accepted into the membership of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church. This application is processed through the Board of Reference and Counsel of the Conference. Upon the recommendation of this body, the national church is received into the membership of the larger conference brotherhood of the Mennonite Brethren Church.[117]

The drafters of the document clearly perceived that the retreat of colonial powers and the emergence of new nations with a strong spirit of independence and nationalism in traditional "mission lands" called for concrete changes in

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[116] Guiding Principles, 1963, p. 3.

[117] Guiding Principles, 1963, pp. 18-19.

mission-church and church-mission relationships. But the problem lay in the unilateral character of decision making which left little initiative to the national church.

Principles and Policies for the present. In the 1970s the Board of Missions and Services asked Paul Hiebert to draw up a new policy statement. The first draft was presented to the Board in March 1976. Speaking of partnership and mutual autonomy of both younger and older churches, the document states:

> We recognize the need for the structure of inter-church relationships to reflect this equality between different church bodies. Therefore, we encourage the establishment of relationships for fellowship and consultation between the leaders of mission and North American churches. Since the Board of Missions and Services has been charged with the task of representing the North American churches in inter-conference ministries, it should be responsible for negotiating specific programs of inter-conference ministries with the representative body designated by the national church.[118]

Tone and language of this statement clearly reflect a more fraternal spirit than is evident in the documents of the 1960s cited thus far. Yet organizationally the relationship of the Conference to younger Mennonite Brethren churches in other lands has remained virtually unchanged since the early 1960s.

The Principle of Partnership

Although I made reference to this principle in Chapter 9, it deserves additional treatment as a relational issue. The question of partnership and mutuality in world mission was addressed for the first time at the Conference of the International Missionary Council held in Whitley, Ontario (Canada), in 1947.[119] Here the older Western churches humbly, but frankly, said to the younger churches: "We

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[118] Hiebert, Mission Principles, 1977, p. 13.

[119] Feliciano V. Carino, "Partnership in Obedience," International Review of Mission, special issue: Edinburgh to Melbourne, 1980, pp. 316-328.

accept you as our equals. Let us be partners-in-obedience for the evangelization of the world."[120] Despite its long history of nearly forty years, partnership has not yet been satisfactorily achieved--not even by international mission agencies of the 1980s.[121] Instead, the principle has met with considerable resistance on the mission fields, including those of the Mennonite Brethren.

Early partnership rhetoric. The most important document next to the one adopted at the revolutionary Convention of Yarrow in 1957, is the 1962 "Statement to the Brotherhood from the Board of Missions." Writing of the transfer of administrative responsibilities from the Board of Missions to the national conferences, the General Secretary stated:

> Whatever the strength or the weakness of the conference of a given field may be, the conference is a reality for which we thank the Lord. From here on all work must be planned with this conference; all workers must be called and approved by and integrated into this conference; all finances, except the personal allowances of the missionaries, must be channeled through this conference; and all institutions must be staffed, maintained and directed by this conference. Complete partnership must be accomplished in every area.[122]

If complete partnership must be accomplished, how could it be done? If in no other way, then by legislation, for which the Board of Mission sought Conference approval.[123]

It was one thing for the Mission Secretariat and the more progressive members of the Board to see the need for

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[120] Eric S. Fife and Arthur F. Glasser, Missions in Crisis (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1962), pp. 124-125.

[121] See the incisive essays by Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, Christian Missions in the Eighties: A Third World Perspective, and Partnership in Mission: A View from the Two Thirds World (Bangalore: Partnership in Mission--Asia, 1982 and 1983).

[122] J. B. Toews , Mennonite Brethren Missions Today: A Statement to the Brotherhood from the Board of Missions (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Missions, 1962), p. 15.

[123] Cf. GCY, 1966, p. 59.

relational changes, but it was quite another matter to impart such ideas to the constituency. But the General Secretary tried; he explained to the delegates of the 1963 Convention:

> A world fellowship through the ministry of the gospel of salvation finds its focus in Christ our Lord, its guidance in the Holy Spirit and its expression in a co-labor relationship of a redeemed people from various nations, tongues and races. Older churches, younger churches, missionaries and helpers all join in the common privilege and burden of making Christ known. The functional coordination of this great united effort is the assignment of the administrative office under the direction of the Mennonite Brethren Conference through the Board of Missions.
>
> The service of the administrative office provides the channels of communication and supply, uniting the total effort of the worldwide fellowship in an effectively functioning organism. Older churches and young churches, those that pray and give, those that go and preach, heal and teach--each one does his part to express our love to Christ in a fellowship of obedience.[124]

The Conference was here visualized as consisting of older churches standing in a worldwide fellowship with the younger churches. This called for "Obedience in Partnership," as another document put it. In such a relationship, the document stated, "we recognize ourselves as one brotherhood of the Mennonite Brethren Conference international with Christ as our head and we His members." The document went on to suggest that the churches in North America send workers "to the fellow believers in other lands for a ministry in the Word and in return welcome brethren from sister churches abroad" to minister in the American churches for shorter and longer periods of time.[125]

> As Conferences of the Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America we propose a united obedience to the missionary assignment of Christ in a program of partnership in opportunity and responsibility to extend the message of salvation to the multitudes of our generation who have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Such obedience in partnership is to be visualized through the following channels:

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[124] GCY, 1963, p. 63.

[125] GCY, 1963, p. 95.

> (a) Through the creation of mission committees in the M.B. churches and Conferences to stimulate mission interest in a more vital expression of our responsibility regarding the commandment of Christ to preach the gospel to every creature (Matt. 28:19,20; Luke 24: 46-48).
>
> (b) Through the recruitment of personnel from churches to join the ranks of missionaries sent to other lands with spiritual undergirding and financial support from their home constituency.
>
> (c) Through a general active responsibility for financial resources to extend the outreach of evangelism around the world.[126]

Those were novel--if not radical--ideas of internationalization, ideas far ahead of their time in Mennonite Brethren mission thinking.

Initial partnership success. Three years later the Secretary of the Board of Missions told the Convention delegates in Corn (1966) that some of the principles of partnership had already been implemented. This meant (a) that missionaries were sent out only upon invitation by the national churches; (b) that no missionaries were returning, unless they had special assignments to fill; and (c) that the Board of Missions carried out most business transactions by negotiating with the missionaries and national leaders rather than by unilateral legislation. The Board was also concerned about fostering "interest in 'foreign missions' in our younger churches and how best to assist candidates from these conferences to send as missionaries." The question was "whether the Board of Missions should also serve as a sending agency for the various national conferences."[127] Although no answer was given to that question, the Board of Missions actually considered itself to be in partnership with the national conference in reaching out to "unevangelized areas and communities or in the opening of new areas in close geographic proximity of the conference."[128]

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[126] GCY, 1963, pp. 95-96.

[127] GCY, 1966, p. 59.

[128] GCY, 1966, p. 105.

The proposed organizational relationship of that time also reflects a mood of partnership in mission (Figure 15). If one compares Figure 14 (p. 554) with Figure 15, the difference is most striking by lines drawn to indicate legislative power. Figure 15 has no such power line from the Conference to the national churches, or from the Board of Missions to the governing council, or again from the Administrative Secretariat in the mission office to the Administrative Committee of young churches. The organizational relationship reveals a sense of partnership. One gets a similar impression when looking at the relationship between "Home Church Constituency" and the "Young Church Constituency" (Figure 16). But this diagram can be somewhat misleading, provided one bears in mind that its intent is to show the flow of service <u>from</u> the General Conference <u>through</u> the Board of Missions <u>to</u> the younger churches.

<u>Failing partnership progress</u>. Despite strong administrative determination to make partnership work, and despite some modest success, the progress has been disappointing at best. As I see it, there are at least three administrative and legislative factors that must account for its failing progress, if not its demise.

1. The Missionary Council was changed to the Missionary Fellowship. One of the major problems with the document on "Obedience in Partnership" was never adequately understood by missionaries and national leaders; it was perceived more as a threat than a tool for building relationships. This created a complex of frustrations (a) between national leaders and the Board; (b) between missionaries and national leaders; (c) between the Board and the supporting constituency. What complicated the situation even more was the Board's unilateral decision to reduce legislative power of active missionaries on the field by restructuring the Missionary Council "into a nonlegislative Missionary Fellowship," which meant a radical readjustment for missionaries as much as for national leaders. In explaining

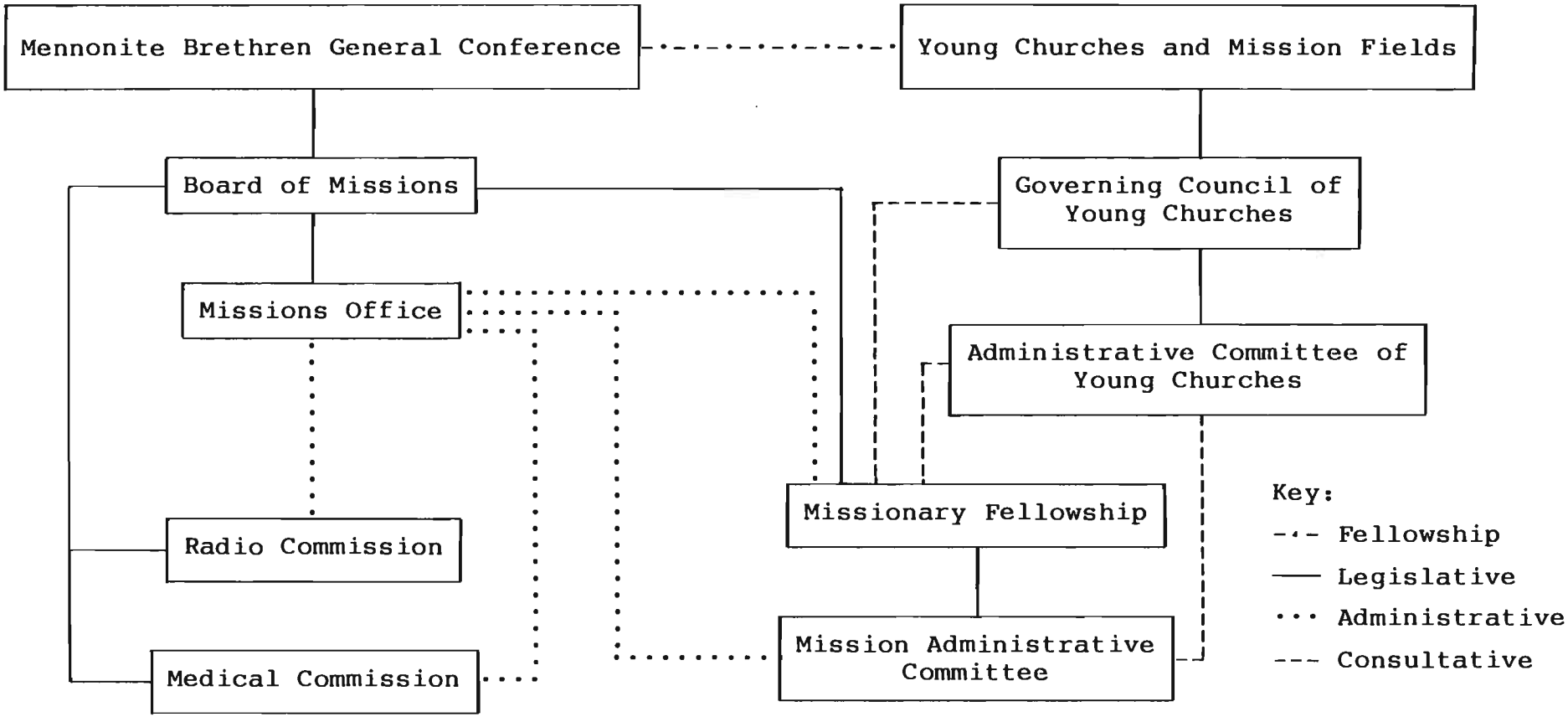

Figure 15

Relationship in Missionary Outreach of Older and Younger Churches 1963

Source: Adapted from GCY, 1963, p. 64.

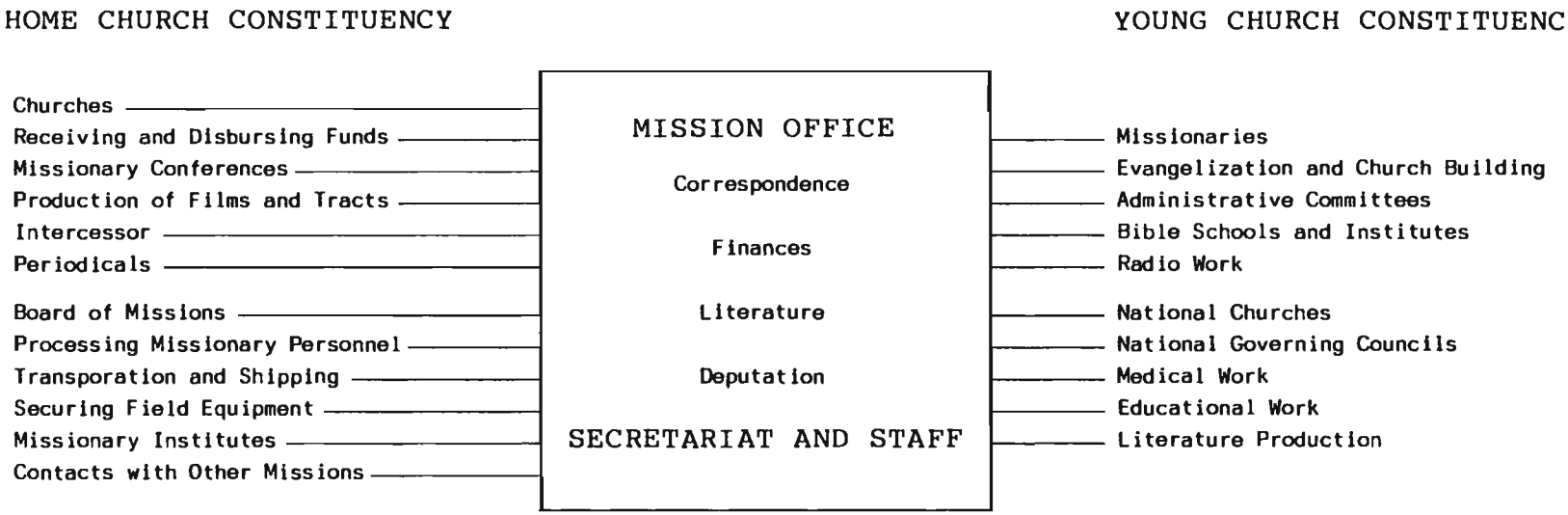

Figure 16

Services and Communications of the Mission Office 1963

Source: Adapted from GCY, 1963, p. 64.

this new structure to the constituency, the Secretariat wrote:

> The missionary is integrating himself into the national conference, accepting his assignment from this body and submitting himself to the directives of this authority. While the missionary may serve in conference committees on the field, he does not do so by virtue of being a missionary, but rather as a brother among brethren, as a member of the national church, having identified himself with the national church and having been elected to this position by this body. Thus he derives his position from the conference on the field. As far as the Mission Board is concerned, the missionary is a fraternal worker in a sister conference who has administrative authority over the missionary.[129]

The above statement must be interpreted in the context of other official documents. The Missionary Council on the field was changed to the Missionary Fellowship. Members in the former organization had the "right to vote, hold office, and participate in the work of the Council according to the regulations set up by the Council itself."[130] This gave the missionaries administrative and legislative power well into the 1950s. But all that changed. The only authority the missionaries retained was the election of a treasurer and the nomination of "candidates for chairman and secretary." From those nominated, the Board of Missions appointed two members, and the Missionary Fellowship elected a treasurer. These three persons made up the Mission Administrative Committee on the field. According to the 1963 Constitution all "detailed organization of the work on the field is governed by the 'Guiding Principles and Policies' of the Board."[131] These Principles stated in no uncertain terms that "the Missionary Fellowship is not a legislative body which determines principles and policies affecting the national church, neither does it rule on questions and needs arising within the national church."[132] Such legislative

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[129] [Toews], Mennonite Brethren Missions Today, p. 14.

[130] Guiding Principles, 1947, p. 14.

[131] Constitution of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches ([Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House], 1963), p. 63.

[132] Guiding Principles, 1961, p. 14; cf. Guiding Principles, 1963, p. 15.

policy was hardly in keeping with the spirit of partnership.

The administrative intent was no doubt noble; its application, however, unwise. The outcome was short of devastating to the principle of partnership. It was not the nature of authority that changed; only the locus of power was shifted from the former Missionary Council on the field to the Administrative Secretariat in the home office.

2. The change of administrative executives caused administrative discontinuity in the partnership process. When the new General Secretary took office in 1969, he seemed to focus more on what the Secretariat of the 1950s and early 1960s had projected, than on what his immediate predecessor from 1963 to 1969 had already implemented. The report of 1972 is disappointing. The General Secretary states: "We will recognize the national church and transfer authority and responsibility as soon as possible."[133] Again he says "that it is best for us now to work together with our national churches as partners,"[134] and that "the missionary will be asked to serve as co-worker rather than administrator."[135] Was this not already a settled issue in the 1960s? The Secretary evidently did not think so. He picked up where the administration in 1963 had left off.

The needed changes of relationship, both organizationally and philosophically, were easier made on paper by mission executive in the administrative office than they were realized by mission practitioners in the laboratory of life.

3. There is a constitutional barrier to the achievement of true partnership. I have shown earlier that the current Constitution confines the responsibility of the Board of Missions and Services to foreign mission instead of assigning

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[133] GCY, 1972, p. 24.

[134] GCY, 1972, p. 26.

[135] Gcy, 1972, p. 28.

it to world mission.[136] The document on partnership suggested internationally cooperative efforts in world evangelism. But how can the Mennonite Brethren from North America ever work in partnership with missionaries from Zaire, or Brazil, or Austria, as long as their responsibility is confined to foreign missions? Who defines what "abroad" or "foreign" means? What if the Austrian or Zairian or Brazilian would define "abroad" and "foreign" to include Canada or the United States? Constitutionally, partnership would have to end right there.

In order to achieve "obedience in partnership" as the documents of the early 1960s stated nearly a generation ago, the Mennonite Brethren will need to make three fundamental changes: (a) they must revise the constitution and allow the Board of Missions/Services greater freedom in missional operation; (b) they will have to internationalize its mission structures to include North America as a legitimate mission field; and (c) they must alter their thinking from foreign missions to global or world mission. This will require a basic change in their concept of mission.

The organizational as well as the philosophical dimensions of true partnership in world mission will remain an ongoing challenge for Mennonite Brethren in decades ahead, as they have been an aspiration in decades past. In his concluding statement at the 1984 Convention in Reedley, the General Secretary of Missions and Services stated:

> Key in long-term planning and effective recruitment at home, as well as effective communication to our churches of our direction abroad, is effective partner-relationships with the church and missionaries abroad. We are encouraging national churches and missionaries to dream (plan, strategize in the presence of the Lord) together with us--so that we may reach the unreached in the world for Christ.[137]

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136 "Constitution and Bylaws of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren," 1981 ed., adapted at the 55th session General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches, St. Catharines, August 7-11, 1981, p. 26. (Xeroxed)

137 GCY, 1984, p. 40.

The issue of partnership is as central to structural church/mission relationships, as it is central to a biblical philosophy and theology of world mission.

Relational Concerns and Models

Although the Mennonite Brethren have formulated their own ideas on church/mission and mission/church relationships, the development of these ideas is best understood when projected against the larger canvas of missiological thinking. Several summary observations about the broader scope of structural relationships with younger churches must suffice here.

The Three-Selves Model

The principles of indigeneity of Venn and Anderson were important. Henry Venn (1796-1873), for over thirty years (1841-1872) General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society,[138] and his contemporary Rufus Anderson (1796-1880), for a similar period of time (1832-1866) the Foreign Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,[139] were the pioneers of church/mission and mission/church relationships in the modern mission era. Venn made his theory most explicit in his correspondence with missionaries and in his biography of Francis Xavier,[140] whereas

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[138] See Wilbert R. Shenk, Henry Venn--Missionary Statesman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983; Wilbert R. Shenk, "Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn: A Special Relationship?" International Bulletin of Missionary Research 5 (October 1981), 178-182.

[139] R. Pierce Beaver, ed., To Advance the Gospel: Selections from the Writings of Rufus Anderson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), pp. 9-30; Theodor Christlieb, "Zur Erinnerung an Dr. Theol. Rufus Anderson und seine Missionsgrundsätze," Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift 8 (1881), 451-471.

[140] Henry Venn, The Missionary Life and Labor of Francis Xavier (London: Church Missionary Society, 1862); cf. Max Warren, ed., To Apply the Gospel: Selections from the Writings of Henry Venn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 178-181.

Anderson expressed his thinking most concisely in an essay on foreign mission.[141]

Together Venn and Anderson gave expression to the so-called "Three-Selves-Formula," consisting of self-support, self-government, and self-propagation, and thereby laid the foundation for the movement of indigeneity which sought independence and self-determination for the younger churches. The World Dominion Movement (1916-1968), with its massive demographic research and literary productions--including the writings of Roland Allen[142] and the earliest works of Donald McGavran,[143] became a standard interpretation of the Venn-Anderson theory and a powerful advocate for the younger churches.

Mission in the 1970s

Evangelicals on the American continent raised the question of church/mission relations for the first time at the Green Lake Conference in 1971. "Missions in the 70's," said Vergil Gerber, "find themselves at the very heart of severe tensions swirling around church/mission/church relations." He called this "a new eschatological phenomenon of the church worldwide."[144]

One cannot help but ask why it took Evangelicals under the umbrella of the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association and the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association so long to realize the tensions between older churches and younger churches. Had not other Western missions of the

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141 Rufus Anderson, Foreign Missions: Their Relations and Claims, 3rd ed. (New York: Scribners, 1871); cf. Beaver, To Advance the Gospel, pp. 71-146.

142 Allen's writings are known well enough to make a repetitious listing superfluous.

143 I am thinking particularly of McGavran's epoch-making Bridges of God (1955) and How Churches Grow (1957). Subsequently to the demise of the World Dominion Movement both were published by Friendship Press in New York.

144 Vergil Gerber, ed., Missions in Creative Tension: The Green Lake '71 Compendium (Pasadena: William Carey, 1971), p. 11.

International Missionary Council rooted in the more traditional churches already dealt with the issue for many years? This is not the place to enter that debate, except to raise another question about ecclesiology and the role of the church in world mission. Did perhaps the Evangelicals' high view of mission in terms of agencies and tasks eclipse their view of the church? Had they lost the capacity to appreciate the church as a valid spiritual and missionary force in the world for fear that doing so might diminish their regard for missions? If so, the Green Lake Conference can be seen as a timely corrective and a milestone in Evangelical mission history. This came at a crucial time when the Mennonite Brethren were in the process of realignment and reassignment in their own mission projections for the 1970s, as I have pointed out in Chapter 9.

Historical Mission Models

At the conclusion of Chapter 8 I made reference to the Mennonite Brethren high view of the church, based on the theological premise that mission is always mission of the church, and that the church is always the church in mission. While this premise is biblically sound and theologically defensible, it has not always been strictly adhered to in Mennonite Brethren mission activities. The historical reality is that other mission models have repeatedly emerged and been vigorously defended. At given times, these independents did fulfill a specific need which the official church in mission at the Conference level did not meet. This has been true both in Russia and America when such compensatory mission models as Licht dem Osten, the Zelt-mission, the Western Children's Mission, and similar organizations came into being. In view of that historical reality, one is tempted to say with Warneck, "Das geschicht-liche Gewordensein hat auch sein heiliges Recht,"[145]--even

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145 "The happenedness of history has also its divine right." Cf. Gustav Warneck, Evangelische Missionslehre: Ein missionstheoretischer Versuch, 3 vols. in 5 parts, 2nd ed. (Gotha: Perthes, 1897-1905), vol. 2, p. 37.

within the Mennonite Brethren denomination.

The larger missiological context. When dealing with Mennonite Brethren relationships in mission, the peripheral models--if one may call them that--cannot be overlooked. They emerged either to compensate for what was lacking in the Conference structure, or they simply complemented what was inadequately covered by the official church. Their significance can be appreciated when seen in the larger missiological context as well as in the historical setting of the denomination.

Ralph Winter talks about "two structures of God's redemptive mission."[146] The one he calls "the New Testament Church" and describes it as the "prototype of all subsequent Christian fellowships where old and young, male and female are gathered together as normal biological families in aggragate." The other structure Winter refers to as "Paul's missionary band," which is a prototype of all subsequent missionary endeavors, consisting of dedicated and experienced workers who have "affiliated themselves as a second decision beyond membership in the first structure."[147] In sociological language, Winter calls the first model "modality" and the second "sodality."[148] Or, to use Paul Hiebert's more theological language, the one is "the church in mission," the other "the church and mission."[149] In other words, the modality is the missionary church and the sodality is the mission society.

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[146] Ralph D. Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," Missiology: An International Review 2 (January 1974), 121-139.

[147] Winter, "Two Structures," pp. 326-328.

[148] Winter, "Two Structures," pp. 332-342.

[149] Paul G. Hiebert, "Social Structure and Church Growth," in Crucial Dimensions in World Evangelization, ed. Arthur F. Glasser et al. (Pasadena: William Carey, 1977), pp. 67-70; cf. Paul G. Hiebert, Anthropological Insights for Missionaries (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), pp. 249-252; see also Hiebert's "Study Guide," in Peters, Foundations, pp. 170-175.

Because neither of the two models has proven to be entirely satisfactory, Hiebert suggests a third structure, namely "a mixed model,"[150] which in function is somewhat similar to Winter's "warp-and-woof" model.[151] The real question is one of the theological center: Is it in the church? Is it in the mission? Or is it anchored in both? The Mennonite Brethren have both theologically and functionally felt most comfortable with the first and the third models, giving rhetorical preference and official sanction to the former. There are strengths and weaknesses in each of the three models (Figure 17).[152]

The church-centered model. In this model the church or denomination sees itself in the world as crossing frontiers towards the world in order to witness by character, by word, and by deed on the other side of those frontiers.[153] The approach is essentially wholistic, aiming to meet the spiritual, physical, social, emotional, and mental needs of people with the definite objective of gathering the believers into strong, self-sufficient, yet interdependent local congregations. Both initiative and resources of this mission model lie within the denomination, with a mission board as the responsible operating vehicle. This is what Winter refers to as the "vertical structure": the mission is entirely within the denomination and moves missionarily across cultures on behalf of it.[154] This model describes

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[150] Hiebert, "Social Structure," p. 69; Anthropological Insights, p. 252.

[151] Ralph D. Winter, "Churches Need Missions Because Modalities Need Sodalities," Evangelical Missions Quarterly 7 (Summer 1971), 193-200.

[152] In my reflection on this topic I have been greatly stimulated by the writings of Hiebert and Winter already referred to in this chapter. See also G. W. Peters, "Mission-Church Relations Overseas," in Missions in Creative Tension, ed. Vergil Gerber (Pasadena: William Carey, 1971), pp. 189-230.

[153] See Chapter 1, Figure 2.

[154] Winter, The 25 Unbelievable Years 1945-1969, pp. 100-101.

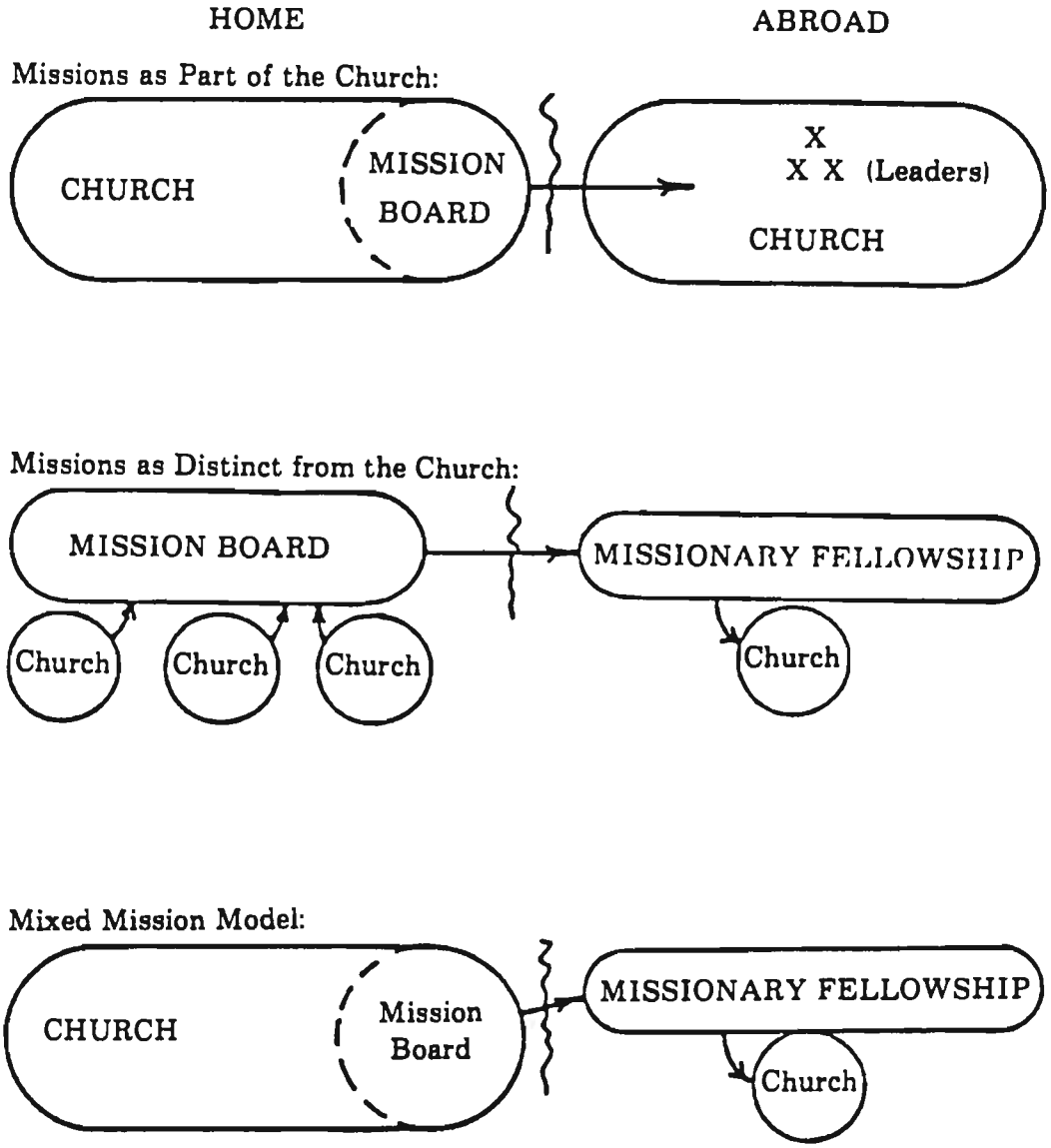

Figure 17

Three Common Social Structures Used in Mission Work

Source: Paul G. Hiebert, "A Study Guide," in G. W. Peters, Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions (Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1984), p. 186.

best the Mennonite Brethren Conference position. Missionaries of the sending church identify with the people of the emerging church.

This model is in every respect a mission on the road from the church to the church.[155] Its strengths lie in a strong ecclesiology, leading to churches that have both a missionary dimension and a missionary intention. Its missionary task is not complete until the emerging church is a missionizing church, having its own leaders as well as its own personal and financial resources. But there is a danger inherent in this model: the members of the mother church which has planted and nurtured daughter churches tend to cease being an evangelistic church and start expending most of their energies on institutional maintenance. "There are so many needs to minister to abroad and so many activities to support at home," notes Hiebert, "that they lose their central commitment to evangelism and church planting."[156]

The mission-centered model. From a historical perspective, this model has found its fullest expression in the faith mission movement, initiated by Hudson Taylor with the China Inland Mission in 1865.[157] But various Pietist groups in Europe with a theological orientation of the ecclesiola in ecclesia have also been strong proponents of this model. In this model, mission-minded people take the initiative and organize a mission agency, establish a mission fund, and recruit mission personnel, independent of the ecclesiastical structure.

The mission agency becomes primary and the home church secondary. At the same time, however, the missionaries usually retain membership in their home churches and form an

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155 "Mission ist die Wegstrecke von Kirche zu Kirche." Johannes Dürr, Sendende und werdende Kirche in der Missionstheologie Gustav Warnecks (Basel: Basler Missionsbuchhandlung, 1947), p. 34.

156 Hiebert, "Study Guide," p. 171.

157 Cf. W. Harold Fuller, Mission-Church Dynamics (Pasadena: William Carey, 1980), pp. 35-36.

interdenominational missionary fellowship on the field. While this may seem like a theological paradox, it is the most expedient arrangement: (a) individuals and local churches provide the financial base for the agency and thus the missionary; (b) it allows for doctrinal or confessional flexibility on an interdenominational or nondenominational basis; (c) it helps create a theological esprit de corps in the missionary fellowship where no particular church doctrine becomes binding for its members; (d) all missionaries are responsible to the agency, rather than the church from which they come; and (e) the task of the missionaries is to plant "indigenous churches" with whom they themselves need not be--and usually are not--identified.

While there are obvious strengths in this model, it is not free from serious handicaps. On the one hand, it has a high view of mission and is dynamic in its evangelistic zeal. Since its primary goal is the evangelization of the world by reaching the unreached with the gospel message, it is strong in such specialized ministries as production and distribution of Christian literature, translation, and dissemination of the Scriptures, and the use of radio and television for reaching the masses. On the other hand, it has a low view of the church, yet uses the resources of the church for its own kind of missionary purpose. Paul Hiebert raises some pertinent questions, saying,

> Because there are two distinct structures, mission and church, the question arises when and how to transfer responsibility from one to another. Can the church maintain the institutions established by the mission? And how does the mission relate to the national church once the transfer has taken place--is there still a place for it, is it subordinate to the church, and what is its responsibility if the national church asks it to leave even though the church has no evangelistic outreach of its own? Finally, this approach sometimes leads to a focus only upon evangelism to the exclusion of concern for justice and human need.[158]

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[158] Hiebert, "Study Guide," p. 173.

The double-centered model. An example of the double-centered or mixed model lies within the historical realm of Mennonite Brethren mission practice. That is why they can best learn from their own history, which reflects real tension between the church-centered model established by the Conference and the mission-centered model practiced by missionaries. When the Conference founded the Committee for Foreign Mission in 1896, it did so in accordance with its theological conviction that the church is the church in mission. The Committee (and later the Board) was simply designed as a vehicle to make the Conference missionarily mobile, able to cross geographical and cultural frontiers. Thus the Conference (not a mission committee) with its personnel and monetary resources became the sustaining force at the home base.

But not so on the field. When the Mennonite Brethren pioneer missionaries--first from Russia and then from America--came to India, they were attracted to the faith mission models. They organized missionary fellowships which became spiritual fortresses for the foreign missionaries, apart from the local national churches which they themselves planted. The object, of course, was from the outset that these churches would become independent by generating their own support, leadership, and forms of witness to the world. This structure may in some instances have created a dichotomy between theology and practice. Theologically, the Mennonite Brethren missionaries have always been anchored in a church committed to meet physical as well as spiritual needs. In practice, however, the double field structure, with a strong pull of the mission-centered model, patterned after the Faith Missions, may at times have weakened the gospel of the kingdom, which has a balanced focus on spiritual and material needs of mankind.

Another effect of the double model on Mennonite Brethren relationships in mission is at the level of resources at home. While the Brethren officially never promoted a missionary model that operated independent of and distinct from the

Conference, individuals and local congregations have provided large sums of money and supplied unknown numbers of missionaries for these organizations, as I have pointed out earlier. It is not hard to see that such support tends to increase in the same proportion as Conference loyalties tend to decrease.

The international model. To the above models there must be added another one which profoundly impacts relationships in mission in terms of increased interdependence, partnership, and equality. This model has to do with internationalization.

> One of the greatest tasks now facing the church is to construct models for international church-and-mission relationships that have no vestiges of the colonial past. How do we recognize the autonomy and equality of churches in different countries, but still build organizational structures that will permit them to work together to accomplish the work God has given them to do? How do we overcome cultural differences, feelings of superiority, inequalities of wealth, and national loyalties, in order to become one in Christ? This oneness must find its expression not only in our theology, but also in the social structures we create.[159]

The present generation of international Mennonite Brethren face the challenge of developing a biblical theology of relationship in mission that will break the "power habit"[160] and make them truly a church in world mission, in which churches at home and abroad will proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom as partners in obedience under the Lordship of Christ.

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[159] Hiebert, Anthropological Insights, p. 252.

[160] Peter M. Hamm, "Breaking the Power Habit," Evangelical Missions Quarterly 19 (July 1983), 180.

Chapter 13

THE LORD AND THE WORLD

Introduction

The Mennonite Brethren have neither formulated a theology of mission[1] nor systematized a corpus theologicum of any kind. What they do have is a theologia viatorum, a theology en route that emerges as a result of their missionary action. In other words, the Mennonite Brethren are missionally and otherwise still in the process of self-theologizing. Whenever challenged either to define their theological position or to defend their missional action, they have attempted to do so in light of the Bible, as the 1978 statement on "Interpretation of Scriptures" spells out.[2] Their understanding of what the Bible says about the church and its mission in the context of historical events has served as norm for both their assumed and their articulated mission theology. But the product of their theologizing process has been more explicit in statements on mission philosophy than on theology. Yet the two are so intertwined that it is difficult to treat them separately. Therefore, I will reflect simultaneously on both (a) by delineating underlying premises; (b) by outlining the assumption that God is the Triune Lord of mission; (c) by describing the human world as mission field; (d) by looking at God's Word as the mission message; (e) by viewing the church as the mission medium; (f) by focusing on an emerging MB mission theology; and (g) by suggesting the development of a philosophy of mission which has gained significant support in recent years.

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[1] G. W. Peters, Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions (Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1984), p. 43.

[2] GCY, 1978, pp. 12-15. For the meaning of GCY see Chapter 8, footnote #22.

Underlying Premises

Mennonite Brethren Mission thinking and action are based on two sets of fundamental premises. Each of these, in turn, hinges on two theological paradigms: (a) the Lord and the world, and (b) the church and the Word. The first set is so basic that the second is unthinkable without it.

The First Set: The Lord and the World

While the first paradigm is profoundly theological in character, the second is more anthropological and socio-cultural in design. The Lord in his triune being is the mission subject. He is the Urquell, the primordial source, the pioneer and initiator of mission. Every redemptive effort in mission emanates from him. The world in its multi-faceted makeup within space, time, and eventful happenings is the mission object. That is to say that the redeeming Lord always moves towards the unredeemed but redeemable world. The two have been indissolubly related ever since God's act of creation. All else in mission thinking and action is because of these two reference points: the Lord and the world.

The Second Set: The Church and the Word

This set of premises grows out of the first and, again, consists of two paradigms: the church and the Word. The Word is from the Lord and constitutes his message to the world. The church is from the world and constitutes God's redeemed people for the transmission of the Word to the unredeemed peoples still in the world. As paradoxical as it may sound, the church can only survive by influx from the world. The raw material for building the church lies in the world. There are the ungodly and unredeemed building blocks which Jesus uses to build his church (cf. Eph. 2:11-22; Mt. 16:18). But I must add that the world does not exist for the church; the church exists for the world. The church is there to reach the world with the transforming power of the gospel.

Unfolding the Story

The stories of the premises just listed are unfolded in the biblical record which for the Mennonite Brethren has always been the source of inspiration and the power of motivation in mission. The first eleven chapters of Genesis not only tell the story of God's creation, they are also a profound reflection on the Lord's concern for the world he created. The primary focus of that story is on humankind: created in God's image, fallen into sin, and now living in a broken world, culpable and guilty before God (Gen. 3:1-24; Eph. 2:1-16). With Genesis 12 begins another story, namely the story of the making of the people of God. God invested in them his plan for the world, a plan of redemption and restoration (Gen. 12:1-3; Ex. 19:5-6; Pet. 2:9-10). The climax of that long story was reached when God became incarnate in Jesus Christ who died for the world's sin and rose for the believer's justification (Rom. 4:22-5:2). Sin can now be forgiven and humanity reconciled. The gospel is the good news of that eventful story and God's power for the salvation of humankind (Phil. 2:5-11; John 3:16-17; Rom. 1: 16-17).

All this means that at the heart of Mennonite Brethren theology of mission is a deep concern for the relationship between God and the world in the light of the saving gospel.[3] This is their basic mission model. The assumption is that God is the originator of mission and the world its object; the Word is the message of mission and the church its agent. The church brings the Word to the world of lost humanity as a witness to God's Kingdom. When vertically visualized, the order of this model goes like this: Lord-Word/Church-World (Figure 18). In other words, the Lord reaches out to the world with the Word through the church.

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[3] David J. Bosch, Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980), p. 10.

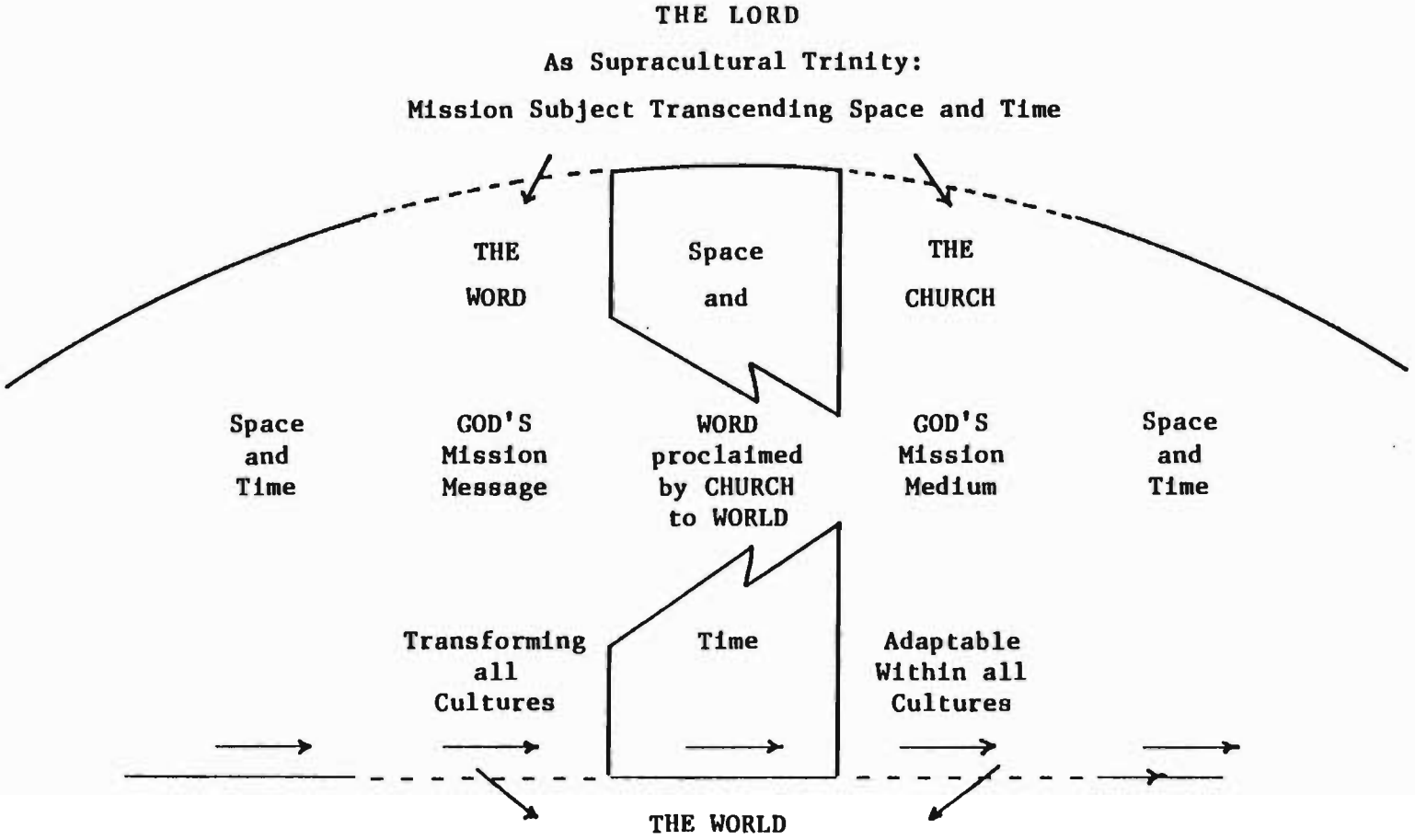

Figure 18

Mission from the Lord to the World

Source: Hans Kasdorf, It's Sunrise in World Mission: A Vision Statement from the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (Fresno: Biblical Seminary, 1984), p. 12.

The Triune Lord of Mission

Mennonite Brethren confessionally affirm that God is "the eternal Spirit, infinite in holiness, power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, love, and mercy. This one and only God has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit."[4] The Holy Trinity is missionary through and through both in essence and in action. "That is why we speak of the missio Dei or mission of God," says the faculty of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in its Vision Statement.[5] The conviction behind that statement is foundational for a theology of mission.

Mission Is Anchored in God the Creator

"God the Father, who created all things . . . has revealed Himself in word and deed as the source and sustainer of life. He is the God of love who orders all things to serve His eternal purpose."[6] In the final analysis, all mission flows from God who embraces the world with his love and enlightens it with his light.[7]

The entire missionary movement throughout history is anchored in God. From him emanates even the very thought of mission, as Warneck has pointed out. The very idea of mission is so majestic and sublime that only God himself could have conceived of it. Therefore, mission has its theological grounding in God the Father.[8] As Bosch puts it,

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[4] Confession of Faith of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Christian Literature), p. 10.

[5] Hans Kasdorf, It's Sunrise in World Mission: A Vision Statement from the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (Fresno: Biblical Seminary, 1984), p. 11.

[6] Confession of Faith, p. 10.

[7] Peters, Foundations, p. 49.

[8] Gustav Warneck, Evangelische Missionslehre, 2nd ed. (Gotha: Perthes, 1897), Vol. I, pp. 60-62; cf. Gustav Warneck, Missionsstunden, 2nd ed. (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1886), Vol. I, p. 59; Hans Kasdorf, "Gustav Warnecks missiologisches Erbe," doctoral dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, 1976, p. 282.

"mission has its origin neither in the official church nor in special groups within the Church. It has its origin in God."[9]

A few years ago the Brethren declared: "God himself takes the initiative in world mission. It is first and foremost his task."[10] That is not to say that the church can be a passive bystander. But the church does not create mission; it merely carries it out. The church has the privilege of working together with God who is, by his very nature, a missionary God. He is a "God who crosses frontiers towards the world," and his people cross them together with him. "In creation God was already the God of mission with his Word and Spirit as 'Missionaries' (cf. Gen. 1.2-3)."[11]

Mission Is Modeled by Christ the Redeemer

"We believe in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, whom the Father sent to reconcile us to himself and to redeem us from sin and eternal death." This affirmation of the Mennonite Brethren is in keeping with the theological creeds of the historical churches, saying that Jesus was "true God and true man." He lived, he died, he rose again; he ascended into heaven and "will come again to judge the living and the dead and to establish His eternal Kingdom."[12]

The greatest demonstration of missionary action was when Christ made himself nothing, took on the very nature of a servant, became like a human being, deeply humbled himself, walked the path of obedience to death--"even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:6-8). God sent him from the spheres of supracultural heavens across the cultural frontiers of this

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[9] Bosch, Witness to the World, p. 239.

[10] Mennonite Brethren Missions in the 1980s: A Vision Statement of the Board of Missions and Services (Winnipeg: Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services, [1985]), p. 1.

[11] Bosch, Witness to the World, p. 239.

[12] Confession of Faith, pp. 10-11.

world. Therefore, said Jesus to the Father, "As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18; 20:21). The Father missioned the Son to carry out God's redemptive purposes in the world. After his resurrection, Jesus sent the church to do the same. In the person of Jesus Christ, noted Vernon Wiebe at the 1978 Convention, the church has God's design for mission.[13]

Keeping in mind the model of Jesus, some Mennonite Brethren missiologists have reminded their denomination about the incarnational missionary;[14] about biculturalism as a way of bridge building; about missionary identification, and solidarity as part of their witness to the world.[15] As Christ became the bridge from God to humankind, so the missionary must bridge the gap from the forgiving God to men and women in need of God's forgiveness.

Mission is Empowered by the Holy Spirit

The Confession about the Holy Spirit is emphatic: "We believe in the Holy Spirit, one with the Father and the Son, sent by them to effect redemption in man. He convicts, regenerates, guides, teaches, rebukes, indwells, empowers, comforts, intercedes, unites believers into one body, and glorifies Christ."[16] No Evangelical can quarrel with that statement. In reality, however, Mennonite Brethren theocentric and christocentric emphases stand out more boldly in their preaching and teaching than their focus on the Holy Spirit.

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[13] GCY, 1978, p. 66.

[14] Paul G. Hiebert, Anthropological Insights for Missionaries (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), p. 91.

[15] Cf. Jacob A. Loewen, "Self-Exposure: The Bridges to Fellowship," Practical Anthropology 11 (July-August 1964); Hans Kasdorf, "Lessons from a Christian Anthropologist's Approaches to Communication," Journal of Church and Society 6 (Spring 1970), 35-53.

[16] Confession, p. 11.

In a collection of 414 sermons and sermon outlines by leading Mennonite Brethren preachers, 163 revolve around some aspect of the Trinity: 44 are dealing with God, 109 with Christ, and 10 with the Holy Spirit.[17] Such survey verifies that the Brethren have been weak in their pneumatology. They were often silent about the Holy Spirit and his conscious presence was experientially little known or emphasized.[18]

But does that mean that the Brethren have not been concerned about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and its mission? Not really. Mission executives have theologically been convinced of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. But such conviction seems to have been more an underlying assumption than a pragmatic consciousness or theological formulation. J. B. Toews quotes Harry Boer with emphatic approval, saying,

> We do not know how the Spirit descended, how He indwells the church, or the believer, how He effects heart and mind and how He achieves the wonderful things that are done in His power. The Spirit blows where He lists; we do not know whence He comes or where He goes. We are confronted only with the fact of His presence, with the effects of His presence. The being filled with the Spirit at Pentecost manifested itself in irresistible speaking about the great works of God that came forth from the human spirit wholly seized by the divine Spirit.[19]

"But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost has come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the

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[17] See Gerhard D. Huebert, ed., Botschafter an Christi Statt: Eine Sammlung von Predigtentwürfen über freie Texte (Winnipeg: The Christian Press, n.d.), pp. 37-46, 72-80, 185-207; Gerhard D. Huebert, Brot des Lebens (Winnipeg: The Christian Press, 1975), pp. 10-26, 77-99, 119-128; A. H. Unruh, Zwei-und fünfzig Predigtentwürfe (St. Catharines, Ont.: Redekop Book and Music Supply, n.d.), pp. 1, 4-5, 10-11, 15, 18, 28-29, 32-33, 40-41, 51.

[18] Peters, Foundations, p. 53.

[19] Quoted by J. B. Toews, "The Theology of Mission in Acts," in The Church in Mission: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to J. B. Toews, ed. A. J. Klassen (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1967), p. 7.

uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). With these words A. E. Janzen opened his report at the 1951 and 1957 Conventions.[20] In 1951 he added:

> Again three years have passed by since a report of the work of Foreign Missions was given to the General Conference in August, 1948. Although these three years evidence a lively activity, we must ask ourselves in the presence of our Lord and Master if we have really done that which we could have done and whether we have fully availed ourselves of the promised enduement of the Holy Spirit and the gracious help of the Lord Jesus in order to fulfill the command to carry forth the Gospel. According to the Word of God the command is very urgent, for it has to do with the salvation of immortal souls, and the equipment is most holy, for it is wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit.[21]

With equal conviction, Vernon Wiebe stated at the 1972 Convention that the Spirit of the Lord was moving all over the world, and that the Lord in his goodness had again visited Mennonite Brethren missionaries and office personnel "with His mighty Spirit." Wiebe continued in charismatic rhetoric:

> The Lord is good! His spirit is moving all over the world. Everywhere we hear of mass evangelism and mighty revivals. There are many of us who share the belief that before the Lord returns, there will yet be a world revival and a mighty out-pouring of His spirit. Missions and Services is no longer a department of a conference, a board, or a program. We are all in it, all of us are swept into this age of the church and into this wonderful time of revival. . . .
>
> All over the world the Spirit is moving
> All over the world as the prophets said it would be.
> All over the world there's a mighty revolution
> Of the spirit of the Lord as the water covers the sea.[22]

There is evident tension between that which Mennonite Brethren believe and teach about the Holy Spirit in their home churches, and the role which they ascribe to him in their mission rhetoric.

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[20] GCY, 1951, pp. 32-33; cf. GCY, 1957, p. 23.

[21] GCY, 1951, p. 33.

[22] GCY, 1972, p. 27.

The World as Mission Field

At the time of creation, kosmos stood in juxtaposition to chaos. One of God's creative acts was to remove chaos as undesirable and to pronounce kosmos as "good" (Gen. 1:1-31). Thus came into being the world of space and time.

The central focus of the biblical record is on humankind --male and female--created in the image of God. The kosmos became their world: their physical, cultural, social, moral, and religious habitat. It became their arena for living: the historical context to act out their relationship to the Creator and to one another.

As sin entered into the world, there was once again an element of chaos (disorder) interfering with kosmos (order) by alienating humanity from God. Henceforth there was conflict between good and evil; the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness stood in opposition to each other (Gen. 3:1-4:24; Mt. 12:22-30; Eph. 2:1-10). But God devoted himself to their redemption. The world of humankind in its cultural and ethical context constitutes the real mission field within the larger kosmos.

Interpretation of the World

What, we may ask, has been the Mennonite Brethren cosmology? How have they seen themselves in relationship to the sinful world "out there?"[23] What bearing does their understanding of the world have on their understanding of mission and vice versa? How have they seen the world from a missional perspective?

Then and now. Traditionally, the Mennonite Brethren have been quite weltscheu. By shying away from cultural, political, and social involvement which they considered this-worldly, they fostered a spirituality which they

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[23] Henry J. Schmidt, "Continuity and Change in an Ethical Tradition: A Case Study of North American Mennonite Brethren Church-State Rhetoric and Practice 1917-1979," doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 1981.

believed to be other-worldly. They defined godliness and worldliness in absolute categories of black and white, wrong and right.

With the generational transitions certain changes in the understanding of the world have emerged and tolerance rather than legalism has become a key for interpretation. But that, too, has not been free from hazards and misguidance.

> It is true that past generations of Mennonite Brethren have been all too satisfied with mere geographical and physical isolation in closed communities that were largely "unadulterated" by customs and cultures of other peoples. Sins were defined in terms of culture as much as in terms of more widely applicable principles of Scripture. When higher education, mass media, materialism, secularization, and urbanization became part of the Mennonite Brethren way of life, some of the old standards began to crumble under terrific pressures and demands of new life-styles. Today physical isolation no longer exists, at least not in the North American setting. Cultural distinctives, such as language, mode of dress, and special foods, exist only in fond memories of the "good old days." Modes of authority such as rules, respect for older people, etc., have by and large been abolished without a valid functional substitute. During geographical and cultural transition, the teaching of separation has not been taken seriously enough by the church as a whole, and the sense of distinction between the two worlds has been severely weakened.[24]

The city as the world. Mennonite Brethren have struggled with their view of the sinful city as part of the worldly world. During the early years they resisted living in the city, let alone evangelizing its people. Separation from the world meant keeping one's geographical distance. Some of the questions the Brethren raised at early conferences had to do with living and dealing in the city. In 1883 they complained that this subject "had already caused them much work in the past," and they were determined to settle the matter once and for all. Therefore, Conference leaders drew up a resolution which said that, while they

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[24] Hans Kasdorf, "Reflections on the Church Concept of the Mennonite Brethren," Direction 4 (July 1974), 341-342, with minor structural changes.

could not forbid its members to move to cities, and while they would have to allow them to engage in simple buying and selling, they would warn their members of the grave dangers of getting involved in more serious business transactions which could easily lead to "shipwreck in regard to their faith" (I Tim. 1:19).[25]

Despite Conference disapproval, Mennonite Brethren moved to the cities, lived and established their sustaining livelihood there. Some of those who did so, soon saw the city as a mission field. They began to witness of God's power to change the sinful city. By 1908, the Conference as a whole had been converted to the city and began active mission work in the spirit of other city missions of the time.

Even though the Mennonite Brethren of the 1980s may not have entirely overcome their past city mission mentality, their urbanologists are challenging them to see the urban frontier as the greatest mission field of the present time and to confront city masses of the ghettos with the saving message of the gospel.[26]

In conflict with the powers. The world as a mission field is also viewed as a spiritual battleground. Like their Anabaptist forefathers, the Mennonite Brethren have adhered to a cosmology of two kingdoms: the church as God's redeemed people is likened to the kingdom of God ruled by the Lord Jesus Christ; the world as unredeemed peoples is likened to the domain of Satan dominated by "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2.2). One MB missiologist has

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[25] Konferenzbeschlüsse nebst Konstitution der Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde von Nord Amerika 1883-1919 (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1920), p. 16.

[26] Cf. Edmund Janzen, "The Church and the Urban Frontier," in Church, Word and Word, addresses given at the Clearbrook Study Conference, May 10 and 11, 1974, Mennonite Brethren General Conference ([Winnipeg]: Mennonite Brethren Herald, 1974), pp. 30-39; Henry J. Schmidt, "The Urban Ethos: Building Churches in a Pagan Environment," Mission Focus 8 (June 1980), 26-33.

called this "the conflict of the ages," saying,

> In the final analysis we must accept the fact that Satan seeks to incarnate himself in persons and in systems, seeking to overcome the Lamb of God and His Church and to oppose and block the advancement of the Gospel of salvation. His hatred for God and the truth knows no limits, and the craving for the destruction of souls is his consuming passion. Never before in history have the Christian forces experienced such well-organized and such total mobilization of evil as we find it today. World philosophies are being shaped and forced upon mankind which find their source in Satan himself, which appeal to the very lowest in sinful man and which defy everything sacred. It behooves us, therefore, to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" and to "put on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles (onslaughts) of the devil" (Ephesians 6:10,11).[27]

Therein lies the basic understanding for the Mennonite Brethren of the church as a mission force sent into the world of powers as a mission field.

Salvation for the World

The world is lost, but redeemable; humanity is fallen, but redeemworthy; God, the Creator is also God, the Redeemer. This, in a nutshell, is Mennonite Brethren thinking on salvation for the world.

Confessional statements. In their Confession of Faith the Brethren have made their understanding of redemption explicit:

> We believe that man was created in the image of God, sinless, and in fellowship with God, with a free will to make moral choices. But man sinned, and willfully disobeyed God, breaking fellowship with Him and bringing physical, spiritual and eternal death on the whole human race. Consequently all are sinful by nature, guilty before God and in need of forgiveness through Christ. Gen. 1:27; 3:1-19; Mt. 19:13-15; Rom. 3:10-18; 5:12; 18:21; Eph. 2:1-3. . . .
>
> We believe that there is one Mediator between God and men, the Man Jesus Christ. The purpose of His coming was to redeem man from the judgment and power of sin and to reconcile him to God. Through the shedding

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[27] [J. B. Toews], Mennonite Brethren Missions Today: A Statement to the Brotherhood from the Board of Missions (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Missions, 1962), p. 6.

> of His blood, Christ provided the one sufficient sacrifice for sin and established God's New Covenant. . . . Acts 2:42; 46; Eph. 1:13-14, 2:8-9; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 4:12; 9:15-28; 1 Jn. 1:9.[28]

Those statements make two propositional claims. The first is anthropological and harmatological: humankind is created in God's image, but has fallen into sin. Therefore, the human race is sinful by nature and guilty before God. The second claim is theological and soteriological: God has provided salvation through the atoning death of Jesus Christ in order to redeem humanity from sin and reconcile it to God. This has implications for the world as mission field.

Individual and corporate convictions. The Mennonite Brethren have throughout their missional involvement had a great burden for lost souls. They challenged young and old to go to the "highways and byways" and compel men, women, and children to be reconciled to God, lest they be eternally lost.

Their conviction that God wants to save souls is seen in their zeal for evangelism as well as in missionary reports and letters. We may recall that the Mennonite Brethren at their first conference in Russia in 1872 appointed five Reiseprediger as itinerant evangelists and elected a committee to promote and administer this work.[29] The same was true in America. At first they had only Reiseprediger for Seelenpflege or spiritual nurture, but soon they added evangelists for Seelenrettung or the salvation of souls. The church in the world was viewed as the saved flock, secure within the fold; the masses of the world were seen as lost sheep, wandering aimlessly but surely toward eternal perdition.[30]

No one has articulated the lostness of the world and a

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[28] Confession of Faith, pp. 12-13.

[29] See this study, Chapter 6, p.

[30] Cf. Heinrich Voth, "Unser Missionar für Indien," Zionsbote, June 8, 1898, p. 3.

matching burden for souls with such consuming passion as missionary A. A. Janzen. "The zeal for missionary work," he wrote, "is derived from the belief that to die without the knowledge of Christ is to be lost for all eternity."[31] The theological seriousness with which Janzen approached this subject is seen in a document entitled, "Are the Heathen Lost?" He answered with an unequivocal "yes," saying,

> If the heathen, those who have never heard the gospel, are not lost one would not sense any deep compulsion to obey the command of Christ to preach the gospel to all the people. There is no purpose in simply bringing civilization to them, give to them our western culture such as schools, colleges, teachers, doctors, nurses, hospitals, etc. To give them these benefits would cost too much and demand too great sacrifice of separation from loved ones, living in a far away land, consorting with alien and all-cultured people, enduring deep and long drawn out loneliness, exposing the body to serious climatical diseases, facing possible attacks by lawless mobs, and finally, maybe passing through sudden and terrible death. Life would be considered too precious to spend its strength in the pursuit of such objectives. Unless the heathen need the gospel for the saving of their souls, to redeem them from a hopeless grave separated from God and Christ and their eternal doom then only it is worthwhile to leave home-land, kin and kindred, ease, comfort, physical and educational advantages, all that goes to make the home life alluring and profitable, for the sake of delivering people from perdition and bringing them to Christ and at last to an eternal heaven.
>
> The Old Testament speaks to the condition of the heathen in the passage of Psalm 9:17: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Micah affirmed this truth in a statement "I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen" (Micah 5:15).
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> The words of Jesus express the heart of the New Testament gospel when he says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16). The master here implied that the preaching of the gospel was a matter of life and death; that the man which does not believe must remain in his lost condition and that it is only the man who heard and received the gospel who shall be saved. The assignment of Paul was very clear when the

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[31] Quoted by J. B. Toews, The Mennonite Brethren Church in Zaire (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1978), p. 40.

> Lord said to him, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 26:18). Here then is the revelation of the all-seeing one. He affirmed that the heathen are spiritually blind and do not see; that they walk in darkness and need the light; that they are in the possession and under the dominion of Satan required to be delivered from him and brought to God; that the sins are so many and great as to call for divine forgiveness.
>
> All that remains therefore is for us to decide which we love the better, ourselves and our ease or Christ and the souls of men.[32]

In keeping with Mennonite Brethren mission thinking of the time, Janzen saw the heathen world "out there"; for him this was the authentic lost world, because he was out there--in Africa--helping to save the lost for more than forty years.

God's love for the world. To say that God intends to save the world is to say that the world needs saving, that it is lost, and that God loves the world. It is hardly an overstatement to say that until recent decades every man, woman, and child in the Mennonite Brethren Church knew John 3:16-17 by memory and could recite it whenever called upon: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (RSV). During his tenure as General Secretary, J. B. Toews quoted John 3:16, saying:

> We rejoice in the fact of divine redemption which has been made possible through the demonstration of God's love in Christ Jesus. In Christ God loved the world--the whole world of humanity--and made provision for the salvation of all mankind. . . . As we rejoice in our personal salvation through the love of God, we should never lose sight of the fact that the Lord Jesus has made the redeemed church responsible to proclaim the message of God's love to the rest of the world. . . . Do I have the right to enjoy the sunshine of God's love and the privilege of personal salvation without doing my

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[32] Quoted by Toews, Zaire, pp. 40-41.

> utmost on behalf of those who in our time still long to hear the gospel?[33]

That was not merely a rhetorical question for Toews; it was a moral and spiritual challenge. From God's love for the world issue call and responsibility to proclaim the Word as good news to lost humanity.

The Church in the World

The church stands between two powers--the divine and the demonic; it stands between two spheres--the eternal and the temporal; it stands between the times--the past and the future. It represents all these dimensions as the people of God in mission on behalf of the peoples of the world without the gospel.

Central to Mission

"From the Missio Dei alone emanates the missio ecclesiae," asserted the late Arno Lehmann some years ago.[34] While the Mennonite Brethren have readily recognized world mission as God's work, they have never negated their missional responsibility as God's people in the world. The idea of the mission of the church is for the Mennonite Brethren a biblical principle; they see themselves as "the church in mission."[35] Their ecclesiology has simply not allowed them to think mission apart from church. Karl Hartenstein's maxim applies more aptly to the Mennonite Brethren than to some other denominations: "Wer Kirche sagt, sagt Mission; wer Mission sagt, sagt Kirche."[36] That is how the Brethren view the church.

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[33] J. B. Toews, "Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt," Zionsbote 68 (January 20, 1954), 6.

[34] Arno Lehmann, "Die Bibel beim Werden und im Leben der Jüngeren Kirchen," Evangelische Missionszeitschrift 17 (1960), 172.

[35] A. J. Klassen, ed., The Church in Mission: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to J. B. Toews (Fresno: The Board of Christian Literature, 1967).

[36] "Whoever says church, says mission; whoever says mission, says church" (quoted by Hans-Werner Gensichen, in Karl Müller, Missionstheologie [Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1985], p. 32).

That may explain in part why they have found it historically and structurally notoriously difficult to perceive of mission efforts initiated by individuals or groups without Conference endorsement. Whenever independent mission endeavors did emerge--as they frequently did--(e.g., in China and Africa), the Brethren found it next to impossible to recognize these missions as legitimate or to support them as worthy causes.[37] Officially, they have simply seen themselves as the church in mission for the world.

Such high view of the church is both positive and negative. It is positive, in that the believers stand in a covenant relationship to one another; they are accountable to each other; they are also interdependent in community. It can also have negative implications when it is viewed as an end in itself, rather than "the firstfruits of God's rule and kingdom." Although the church is central to mission, it is so only as an instrument of the kingdom of God.[38] David Bosch offers a powerful distinction between church and kingdom:

> Church people think about how to get people into the Church; Kingdom people think about how to get the Church into the world. Church people worry that the world might change the Church; Kingdom people work to see the Church change the world. When Christians catch a vision of the Kingdom, their sights shift to the poor, the oppressed, and the lost. They see the life and the work of the church from the perspective of the Kingdom.[39]

Between the Times

The Mennonite Brethren recognize the origin of the church as a creation of God by the Holy Spirit. The church is a divinely chosen instrument for the proclamation of the

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[37] See my comment above on "Relationships Three Times Tested," Chapter 12, pp. 509-547.

[38] Wilbert R. Shenk, A Theology of Mission in Outline (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Board of Missions, 1978), p. 2.

[39] David J. Bosch, "Mission and Evangelism: Clarifying the Concepts," Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft 68 (July 1984), pp. 161-191.

supracultural gospel to humankind in a culturebound world. While standing in the present age, the church has deep roots in the religious history of the Old Testament am Yahweh, the people of God.[40] They belong to the redeemed of God, are called into a covenant fellowship with God, are privileged to be a nation of priests for God, and are charged with the task of bringing the light to the nations. In doing so, they are intentionally carrying out God's redemptive purposes in this world (cf. Ex. 19:5-6; Hosea 1:9; I Peter 2: 9-10).[41]

Seeing themselves as God's people rooted in salvation history, the Mennonite Brethren speak of a new age, the age of the church between the ages of history: the resurrection and the return of Christ. As Peters notes, they perceive this to be the time of world evangelization.

> We are living in the age of the church, an age which, according to Ephesians 3:6 and 11, is something new and great. The church of Jesus Christ is to be gathered from among all nations, for God is not a God of favoritism or particularism. God loves the world; his Son became the propitiation for the sins of the world; the Holy Spirit is operating to convict the world; the disciples were sent into the world to preach the gospel. All the world must hear God's call. Thus the realization of the eternal purpose of God for our age becomes bound up with world evangelization.[42]

But this is not a time without tension and conflict. In fact, the church in mission is the church in "conflict of the ages,"[43] an idea that can be forcefully described in borrowed words by David Bosch:

> The New Age has begun, the Old has not ended. The New dates from the Resurrection, the Old will last until

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[40] David Ewert, "The Biblical Concept of the Church," in The Church in Mission: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to J.B. Toews, ed. A. J. Klassen (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1967), p. 33; cf. Peters, Biblical Theology, p. 199.

[41] Ewert, "Biblical Concept," pp. 34-36; Peters, Biblical Theology, pp. 200-202; cf. David Ewert, "The Covenant Community and Mission," The Voice 19 (July 1970), 137-151.

[42] Peters, Foundations, p. 51.

[43] [Toews], Missions Today, p. 6.

> the final manifestation of Jesus Christ in Glory. In the meantime we can only know by faith whether we do belong to the New Age or the Old. Most of what we do will probably belong to both ages. But because people are striving for utopia they hope to attain a position where this ambiguity is overcome. Utopia, however, never takes account of the reality of evil. It is sheer fanaticism to fool ourselves into believing that what we plan and do is free from the contamination of the Evil One. Whatever we do as Christians, remains a mixture of human endeavours, divine guidance and demonic distortions.[44]

A Biblical Perspective

In a penetrating address delivered at the Prayer Conference of the Pacific District Mennonite Brethren Churches held in Fresno on November 6-7, 1958, D. Edmond Hiebert addressed the theme, "In the World . . . But Not of It."[45] What, then, Hiebert asked, is the church's relationship to the world? Based on a study of John 17, Hiebert lifted out four prepositional phrases and concluded that the believer's relation to the kosmos is always one of tension and paradox.

1. The church is taken out of the world (v. 6). On the one hand, this has resulted in an atmosphere of spiritual and moral alienation between the church and the world. On the other hand, it has given the church a sense of belonging to God. This new identity may cause jealousy--even hatred and rejection--in the world. But the church remains spatially in the culture of the kosmos as a corrective agent.[46]

2. The church is living in the world (v. 11). God lets the believers live physically and culturally amid

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[44] Quoted by Hennie Pretorius, "'White' South African Ecclesiology," Missionalia 9 (April 1981), 22.

[45] D. Edmond Hiebert, "In the World . . . But Not of It," Christian Leader 22 (January 13, 1959), 4-5, 24; 13 (January 27, 1959), 4-5, 9.

[46] Hiebert, "In the World," Christian Leader 22 (January 13, 1959), 4-5.

ordinary experiences of life and action; he lets them struggle for their own good; he lets them experience conflict and tension, so that they may mature in Christ. He lets them live there to learn to be different.[47]

3. The church is not of the world (v. 14). While the believers are physically in the world, they are morally and attitudinally not in harmony with the spirit of this world-system. They have a radical commitment to God; they serve no other gods; they are instruments of righteousness for God and his kingdom (Ex. 20:6; Rom. 6:13). They are kingdom people, serving the King of kings whose kingdom is as little identified with the moral kosmos as they themselves (Lk. 12:32; John 18:36).[48]

4. The church is sent into the world (v. 18). This is its special mission: the mission of sentness for service and suffering. Just as Christ was sent into the world by the Father, so the disciples of Christ are sent into the world by Jesus. After saving his people "out of the world," said Hiebert, "He does not immediately take them 'from the world' because He has a mission for them here 'in the world.'"[49]

Hiebert's interpretation of the church is indicative of the tensions under which Mennonite Brethren have lived and missionized in the world. It is the biblical perspective pronounced by Jesus of what it means to live in dialectical tension in this world without being of it. This is a tension which has severely tested Mennonite Brethren understanding of separation from the world while being called to witness of God's redeeming grace and greatness in the world.

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[47] Hiebert, "In the World," Christian Leader 22 (January 13, 1959), 5.

[48] Hiebert, "In the World," Christian Leader 22 (January 13, 1959), 5, 24; cf. Robert Webber, "Living in the World: What Is Our Role as Salt and Light?" Christian Leader 39 (May 11, 1976), 2-4.

[49] Hiebert, "In the World," Christian Leader 22 (January 27, 1959), 9.

A Missional Self-Understanding

What, we may ask, has been the Mennonite Brethren self-understanding of their mission to the world? Three official Conference documents with theological implications specifically address the missional responsibility of the church in the world.

1. In their Confession of Faith, the Mennonite Brethren affirm that the church is the body of Christ "established through God's redemptive work in history," and that the Lord through his Spirit "gives gifts to the church to be exercised for the upbuilding of believers and the propagation of the Gospel." Therefore, the church's primary responsibility is to make disciples of all nations. This can be accomplished only to the extent to which every member takes seriously his or her "responsibility to be a witness to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and to call men [and women] to be reconciled to God" (Eph. 4: 7-11; Mt. 28:19; Acts 1:18; II Cor. 5:19-21).[50]

2. What the Confession states doctrinally, the 1936 Konstitution declares missionally: The Mennonite Brethren Conference, say this document, "has the obligation to preach the gospel to all peoples, but particularly to bring to the Gentiles the good news of redemption in Christ according to the mandate of the Lord Jesus: 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature' (Mark 16:15)."[51]

3. In 1947 the Board of Foreign Missions issued its first statement of Principles and Policies in which the missional task was clearly articulated. The 1961 and 1963 editions simply reiterate what the Brethren declared in their earlier statement.

> Accepting the Biblical teaching as a basis and guide, it shall ever be the endeavor of all our missionary activities:

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[50] Confession of Faith, p. 16.

[51] Konstitution der Konferenz der Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde von Nord Amerika ([Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House], 1936), pp. 18-19.

1. To present the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone in the area of a mission field.
2. To baptize those who accept Jesus Christ by faith.
3. To organize and establish such believers in local churches for nurture, mutual edification, fellowship, instruction and service.
4. To unite the local churches of a field into an organized conference and national convention which is the church that continues the proclamation of the Gospel, directs and regulates its own church affairs and meets its own financial requirements.[52]

From the above statements issues the missionary burden of the Bible which is redemptive in character. Its focus is on the realization of God's salvific intent through his redeemed people in an unredeemed world. For "the people of God, in the old and new Testament, are the stewards of God's redemptive provision. The church must address itself to this responsibility in each generation."[53]

If the Triune God is the ultimate and absolute subject of mission and unredeemed humanity its object, then the church as God's redeemed people is the most unique instrument between the two to bring the Word from the Lord as a saving witness to the world (see Figure 18, p. 579).

The Word for the World

One major characteristic of Evangelical Anabaptists was their unconditional acceptance of the Bible as final authority for faith and practice. The Mennonite Brethren recovered this historical legacy and have ever since maintained a high view of the Scriptures as the living Word of God. This has had profound doctrinal, ethical, and evangelistic implications for them as a missionary people, reaching the world for God.

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[52] Foreign Missions: Guiding Principles and Policies, 1st ed. (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Foreign Missions, 1947), p. 7. Cf. 2nd ed., 1961, p. 6 and 3rd ed., 1963, p. 7.

[53] J. B. Toews, "The Theology of Mission in Acts," in The Church in Mission: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to J. B. Toews, ed. A. J. Klassen (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1967), p. 1.

Doctrinal Affirmations

The Brethren declare that "all Scripture is inspired by God as men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit." Therefore, they accept "the Old and New Testament as the infallible Word of God and the authoritative guide for faith and life of Christian discipleship."[54] Article VII of their Confession states that the Brethren view the Word of God as the all-sufficient message to meet the total need of humankind.[55]

These doctrinal convictions were for the first time applied to the missionary enterprise during the late 1930s and the 1940s. As I have pointed out earlier, the Guiding Principles and Policies of 1947 were largely based on statements drafted by H. W. Lohrenz.[56] The theological language of the first official policy document was strongly confessional in nature. Its primary intent was to set spiritual norms for missionaries. "All workers and candidates serving at home and abroad under the Board of Foreign Missions," said the Conference, are required to subscribe unequivocally to the following:

> The new birth by faith in Jesus Christ; being definitely called into His service; possessing a desire and love for Christ and a passion for souls; having faith in the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and believing in one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and is true man and true God; that man was created in the image of God, that he sinned, and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also that spiritual death which is separation from God; that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood; that each individual must experience a personal regeneration, being born again of the Holy Spirit by faith in the

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[54] Confession of Faith, pp. 11-12.

[55] Confession of Faith, p. 16.

[56] See Chapter 12 above, especially footnotes #102-103.

> Lord Jesus Christ, thereby becoming a child of God; believing in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord, in His ascension into heaven, and His present life for us, as High Priest and Advocate, and in His personal and imminent return; believing in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved, and the everlasting punishment of the wicked; and that a life conforming to the teachings of Christ is an essential evidence of a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.[57]

Such creedal statements suggest that the theologizing process of the Mennonite Brethren found its clearest expression in the context of mission and became the foundation for their mission theology. As a member of the body of Christ, the missionary is viewed as the immediate instrument to take the Word to the world. He or she can do so only because of a personal commitment to biblical authority and power. In other words, the Word of God is normative for the life of the believers who are the missionary and missionizing people of God. Wherever proclaimed, the Word is redemptive and transforming in all areas of the unmissionized world of humankind. These two accents are not treated separately but rather as one comprehensive message. They must be held in delicate balance by the missionary and missionizing church as it seeks to live and move and cross frontiers between the Lord and the world.

Obedience of Faith

"Faith in the Word must be demonstrated by acts of love in the world," declared former mission executive A. E. Janzen of Hillsboro in a personal interview.[58] Janzen pointed out that the Mennonite Brethren have always lived by the conviction that the Bible must be theologically believed, morally obeyed, and evangelistically proclaimed. A few vignettes from my interview will clarify what he meant.

1. Faith in the Word embraces the irreducible theology of mission in three parts. For one thing, the Word records

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[57] Foreign Missions: Guiding Principles 1947, p. 8.

[58] Personal interview with Dr. A. E. Janzen, March 27, 1981. Janzen, at age 93, is still active in mission research and writing.

the divine mandate. This is explicitly spelled out in such texts as Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:8. "Those who have had a rebirth experience," said Janzen, "have no choice but to go and to tell; they are bound by a moral obligation to obey the mandate of the risen Lord to proclaim the living Word."

Furthermore, the Word also undergirds the unchanging message. According to Janzen, the Mennonite Brethren have always believed in the uniqueness of Jesus Christ with regard to salvation. Acts 4:12 and John 14:6 express for them that uniqueness in words that cannot be altered: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved." Janzen added with conviction: "Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Only through him can people be saved."

Moreover, the Word provides the principal method of mission, though not in absolute terms. While the mandate and the message are absolute and unalterable, noted Janzen, the method is relative and, therefore, subject to change. Yet there is the abiding biblical principle of wholeness, as the Mennonite Brethren throughout their history have understood it, which has always consisted of "preaching, teaching, healing and helping."

2. Faith in the Word has inspired hope for the world. Therefore, the Mennonite Brethren have evangelistically always preached for a verdict, aiming for conversion--be that in India, China, Africa, or Brazil. They have always sought to plant churches and train converts to become evangelists, teachers, healers, and helpers. Thus the Brethren have always been sensitive to all needs--spiritual, material, physical, and cultural. But as world conditions have changed, particularly during revolutionary upheavals, mission methods have also changed.

Originally, the Brethren thought that they themselves were responsible to meet all prevailing needs. But after World War II, they made wholesome alterations in approach and methodology by facilitating nationals to become better

farmers, evangelists, teachers, healers, and preachers. This is what they believed the Bible was teaching them to do.

3. Faith in the Word calls for obedience to the Lord on behalf of the world. Such faith has been basic to the Mennonite Brethren way of life and to their mission thinking. Janzen pointed out that leading men of the MB Church based every sermon they preached on the Word of God, challenging their listeners to engage in mission to the world. Referring to an essay on American Mennonite Brethren mission, Janzen asserted about early MB preachers:

> They seldom preached a sermon without a missionary emphasis, and their sensitive congregations evidenced a positive response. The very exposure to the reading and hearing of the Word of God wrought a missionary consequence. The simple but sobering truth of the Word that "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16) was inescapable. "The love of Christ constraineth us" (II Cor. 5:14a) operated as a constant test of their spiritual sincerity. It was not a legalistic compulsion, but an overflowing expression of a grateful heart. Glorifying the father meant humble obedience to Christ who had saved them and who commissioned them to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Thus, the missionary concept to them was briefly comprehended in one thing: an obedience to "Go and preach the gospel." Results were expected of the Lord who had thus spoken.[59]

The response of the Mennonite Brethren to the Word of God was simple: Obedience to its mandate and faith in its message. By obedience they moved from place to place to preach the gospel; by faith they believed that "if the word of God is preached, results are inevitable."[60]

Theological Implications

The doctrinal affirmations as well as the ethical dimensions of obedience of faith to the Word have theological implications for the Mennonite Brethren understanding of the

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[59] A. E. Janzen, "The Development of Missionary Dynamic Among American Mennonite Brethren," in The Church in Mission, ed. A. J. Klassen (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1967), p. 156.

[60] Janzen, "Missionary Dynamic," p. 157.

missionary message. They see the Word as having both creative and regenerative or transforming power. "By the word were the heavens made," for as God spoke, so it came to be (Ps. 33: 6, 9; cf. Gen. 1:1-2; John 1:1-3). That same Word also constitutes the good news personified in Christ. The gospel is "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes," regardless of religious or cultural background (Rom. 1:16-17). That, said the late Georg Vicedom, is the essential message of the Bible which "in its totality ascribes only one intention of God: to save mankind."[61]

These words by a Lutheran missiologist express authentic Mennonite Brethren sentiment. There is a deep sense of fundamental biblicism out of which emerges a missionary attitude, a way of life, a missionary dimension which finds its concrete expression in a missionary intention. It is a biblicism that accepts at face value the biblical expressions concerning God's actions in history, his redemptive provisions for the world, and his gift of salvation in Christ for humanity. Only to the extent as God's people are anchored in God's Word can they reach out to peoples of the world.

As General Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions, J. B. Toews made an official plea at the 1960 Centennial Convention of his denomination. His burden was that the Mennonite Brethren would seriously consider the primacy of mission in a renewed way. There are two great factors, he stated, which are basic for the Mennonite Brethren of our time: "The Gospel of God--the Word; and the nations of men--the world." Just as the Apostle Paul was called, so the Mennonite Brethren have from their early history been called to "separation unto the Word for the sake of the world" (Rom. 1:1, 5). As the Brethren have come to recognize more and more the sacred purpose of God's redemptive provisions, Toews challenged, they are now prepared to respond, "We are

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[61] Georg F. Vicedom, The Mission of God, trans. by Gilbert A. Thiele and Dennis Hilgendorf (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1965), p. 4.

redeemed so that the Word will be communicated through us to the lost world."[62]

Mennonite Brethren have traditionally believed in the sufficiency of the message of the Word to meet humanity's total needs in the world. To the present generation, such faith may appear to have been simplistic or naive. But it was not; it was demonstrated by actions of love as expressed by James:

> What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead (James 2:14-17 NIV).

Because of their implicit faith in the Word and their explicit demonstration of their belief by compassionate deeds in the world the Brethren felt no need either to define their missionary action or to defend their message. Two related incidents will illustrate my point.

1. Elder Heinrich Voth. A letter from Elder Voth of Mountain Lake, Minnesota, reflects a deep concern to find missionaries for India, and how the church dealt with that concern by setting aside May 31, 1898, as a special day of prayer. On this occasion the congregation studied the pericope of Matthew 9:35-39. The notes on the text reflect a wholistic concept of humankind as viewed by Jesus. (a) They had needs and misery; (b) they were harassed and helpless; (c) they were scattered and in danger of death, because they had no shepherd; (d) they presented the challenge of a rich harvest; (e) they revealed the shortage of harvesters; and (f) all of this was a call to the church to pray out workers.

The impact of the word was so profound, wrote Voth, that "the church was gripped with a deep sense of compassion for

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[62] GCY, 1960, p. 48.

the lost world, shedding many tears and praying intensely to the Lord of the harvest."[63]

2. Missionary N. N. Hiebert. Subsequent to the prayer meeting at Mountain Lake, Hiebert presented himself to the Conference as its first missionary from America to India. Convinced that the Lord had called him to fulfill a special task in the world, Hiebert made reference to Isaiah 61:1, saying,

> The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has annointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, To preach deliverance to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed, To preach the acceptable year of the LORD (Lk. 4:18-19 NKJV).[64]

It is historically and theologically significant that both Voth and Hiebert interpreted the message of the gospel in wholistic terms, dealing with spiritual and social needs of humankind. For all practical purposes these events can be viewed as a process of self-theologizing in early Mennonite Brethren mission experience.

Until the 1960s, the Mennonite Brethren did not talk much about the dichotomy between evangelism and social concern. They understood the message of the Word to be wholistic in its application and effect. Their concept of mission might be faulted for its foreignness in geographical terms and for cultural insensitivity, but not for lack of essential wholeness. It has always included evangelism to meet the spiritual need of humankind, and such social ministries as education, health care, and agricultural development to meet the intellectual, physical, and material needs of the whole person. Janzen summarized this well by

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[63] Letter by Heinrich Voth under the caption, "Unser Missionar für Indien," Zionsbote, June 8, 1898, p. 3. Peters, Foundations, p. 46, states that the congregation set aside a day of fasting and prayer, and that Voth "preached an impressive message." The letter talks only about a Gebetstag and that the believers "betrachteten die Worte Jesu." It may have been in the form of a sermon, but it is more likely that it was a simple homily of the pericope.

[64] Cf. GCY, 1898, pp. 18-19.

saying that the missionary task consists of "preaching, teaching, healing, and helping."[65] That is why the Brethren in Russia as well as in America were anxious to have teachers and medical personnel become part of their missionary teams. They took Jesus as their missionary model and understood the Word as a wholistic mission message.

An Emerging Theology of Mission

From the above outline about the Lord and the world, several conclusions press themselves upon us which, in fact, appear as an explicit theology of MB mission.

The Historical Process

Mennonite Brethren have historically been more concerned with the pragmatic than the reflective side of their acclaimed biblicism. Like the early Anabaptists, they have simply sought to flesh out the biblical truths in terms of ethical principles in daily living and missional witness in the world; and, like Halle Pietism, they have focused on the experiential and active side of faith rather than the reflective. That has made theological formulations secondary. They would certainly agree with Spener's somewhat un-Lutheran contention "that it is by no means enough to have knowledge of the Christian faith, for Christianity consists rather of practice."[66]

Does that mean that they are still in dynamic stage of "event character" and have not yet reached the stage of "theologizing trait" which I have described earlier?[67] Or does it mean that their Christian priorities are so heavily weighted on the side of activism and works that they see

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[65] Personal interview with Janzen, March 27, 1981.

[66] Philip Jacob Spener, Pia Desideria, trans. and ed. by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 95.

[67] I refer here to my discussion in Chapter 1, based on Herbert Jackson's essay, "The Missionary Obligation of Theology," Occasional Bulletin from the Missionary Research Library 15 (January 1964), 1-6.

little value in quiet contemplation and critical reflection? After being actively involved in mission for more than a century, should mission not already have conceived and given birth to a theology? On the one hand, one would expect that after a hundred years of mission activity "theology as the daughter of mission"--which makes mission the mother of theology, as Martin Kähler contended--[68] should by now be more evident in concrete forms of expression than it is. On the other hand, one might be able to rationalize that the absence of an explicit mission theology in Mennonite Brethren literature can be explained by another basic principle in mission which Kähler expressed this way: "There is no mission without the church and mission is always an expression of the church."[69] Do the Mennonite Brethren perhaps accept their high view of the Believers Church as a valid substitute for a theology of mission? After all, they see themselves as the church in mission and their mission as a legitimate--and adequate--expression of the church, leaving little need for theological reflection.

Whatever the reasons may be for lack of theological formulations, the Mennonite Brethren have experienced three dynamic stages in the development of their theology of mission. The first is best described as salvationist theology, the second as kingdom theology, and the third as Trinitarian Theology. Yet at no time did they abandon one for the other; they rather built one on top of the other, always retaining the former layer while emphasizing the latter. This means that they are operating on three theological layers, missiologically interrelated and historically integrated with one another.

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[68] Martin Kähler, Schriften zu Christologie und Mission, ed. Heinzgünter Frohnes (München: Kaiser, 1971), pp. 89, 190.

[69] Kähler, Schiften, p. 78; cf. p. 166; Gustav Warneck, Evangelische Missionslehre, 2nd ed. (Gotha: Perthes, 1892), vol. 1, p. 242.

The Salvationist Theology

It is striking how much Mennonite Brethren have actually been in tune with the broader theological currents in mission thinking at certain times of history. The salvationist theology is a case in point. This was the classical emphasis with an all-consuming passion for the salvation of souls. It was a time of greatest urgency and immediacy when Christians were simply thrust out into the heathen world to reach the lost for Christ. They needed no theology of mission because they were filled and moved by God's Spirit in mission. Reflecting on this time, Samuel Moffett observes:

> It was as simple as the command of Jesus Christ, and as urgent as life and death for millions upon millions who are dying without Christ. Every second saw more souls slipping into a Christless eternity. No one had ever given them a chance. No one had ever told them that they could live forever--in Christ. And faced with a challenge as simple as that, the Christian church exploded into what has been called the "modern missionary movement." It could be almost described as a race against time and against the devil for the greatest of all prizes, the eternal salvation of the human soul.[70]

Except for the broad scope of the modern missionary movement to which Moffett refers, his observations are an accurate expression of MB mission theology until 1957 where the Conference reviewed its official "Position in Foreign Missions," saying,

> The extension of our mission program has continued to be largely of a spontaneous character without a careful study of fields, pattern of work tried in respective fields or an effort to establish a directive program and strategy for the missionaries who were sent out. The general philosophy of missions called for men and women who would go out "to bring the gospel to the millions who are lost" not requiring the acceptance of directives or established standards to follow. The spiritual motivation of an obedience to our Lord's command constituted practically the inclusive requirement for the task.
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> The status of our missionary program up to this day corresponds to the above stated philosophy which is true in its motivation, sincere in its efforts and

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[70] Samuel Hugh Moffett, "Theology of Missions," Ashland Theological Journal 18 (Fall 1985), 17.

> sacrificial in its devotion, consecrated in its support on the part of the constituencies. The major emphasis rested in the responsibility "we must win the lost for Christ."[71]

This salvationist theology of winning souls for Christ has been the single most forceful motivating factor in Mennonite Brethren mission. "All other phases of the missionary endeavor," declared the Conference in 1943," are subordinated to this main purpose and shall only serve to further the salvation of souls among the heathen."[72] This was the time which the General Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions referred to as "the missionary-centered gospel ministry" with the compelling urgency to "win the lost for Christ."[73] Christ died for all because God wants to save all. "No missionary is ever exposed to the danger of bringing the gospel to people who are excluded from God's plan of salvation," said the late G. D. Huebert in a sermon. "God does not want the sinner to perish, but that everyone repent and live (Hez. 33:11; Jer. 26:3)."[74]

The 1954 Convention in Hillsboro, Kansas, still reflected the same commitment and conviction. P. R. Lange, Chairman of the Board of Foreign Missions, declared to the delegates in Salvationist terms: "We are responsible for 7,000,000 souls in our fields. They are longing for the teacher and the preacher." Then he asked: "Are you waiting in vain? Will the blood of the dying heathen be on our hands?" A. E. Janzen, Executive Secretary/Treasurer, continued in a similar tone, saying,

> The chief criterion of successful mission work must remain that converts believe with all their heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, whom they have appropriated in faith as personal Savior and whose regenerative work has made them vessels for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

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[71] GCY, 1957, p. 42.

[72] GCY, 1943, p. 72.

[73] GCY, 1957, p. 42.

[74] Gerhard D. Huebert, Brot des Lebens: Predigten für die heutige Zeit (Winnipeg: Christian Press, 1975), p. 11.

Stressing that "God would have that all come to the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus," and that numbers matter to God, Janzen added: "During the past Conference interim [1951-54] several thousand souls were saved on MB fields."[75]

The salvationist theology is christologically anchored in a theology of the cross rather than the resurrection; it is rooted in Jesus as Savior rather than in Jesus as Lord. The chairman of the Committee for Foreign Mission wrote in 1924: "The missionary spirit is the spirit of Christ, the spirit of Incarnation and the Cross. Not then to the instruments of the Master, but to the Master Himself be all the praise and glory."[76] This kind of christological focus is not only biblical bedrock, but also much in keeping with MB mission thinking.

> Jesus Christ is the true Son of man, king and lord, coeternal and equal with God the Father, the Lamb of God, friend of sinners, and savior of the world. He is absolutely alone and unique in history; he has neither peer not [sic] substitute. In saviorhood he is unique, sole, sufficient, and irreplaceable. Christianity cannot be placed alongside other religions, but confronts them all and excludes them as conveyors of salvation. For salvation is found in no other than in the name of Jesus, no other way leads to the Father. He is the way, the truth, the life, the light, the bread of life, the resurrection and the life, the door, the good shepherd, the lamb of God. He is the lord of glory, the prince of life who "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10).[77]

There have been times when Mennonite Brethren focused mainly on the Saviorhood of Jesus, as reflected in missionary reports at conferences and conventions. The death of Christ on the cross for the salvation of souls was central. All material endeavors, said the Executive Secretary-Treasurer to the Convention in 1951, have only one aim: "To save

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[75] GCY, 1954, p. 74.

[76] Frank J. Wiens, Fifteen Years Among the Hakkas of South China (Hillsboro: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1924), p. 3.

[77] Peters, Foundations, pp. 50-51.

souls and to build the Church of Jesus Christ."[78]

The strong focus on the death of Christ was based on reading the Great Commission in a particular way, beginning with verse 19, rather than 18, of Matthew 28. The declaration of the exalted Lord's enthronement with "all power in heaven and on earth" was largely overlooked.[79] The Brethren also quoted Paul who was determined to know nothing among the Gentiles "except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).[80] Therefore, to "preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23) was also their primary goal in mission.[81]

Although the salvationist theology rooted in the death of Christ has never been abandoned, the emphasis has shifted from saving souls to proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.

A Kingdom Theology

The kingdom theology which has unfolded in Mennonite Brethren mission thinking was largely shaped by historical forces and most concisely expressed in five theological positions which are rooted in MB understanding of God and in their concept of the church.

Historical development. The theological trends within the international missionary conferences since Edinburgh 1910, the worldwide changes effected by political conflicts and wars, and the shifting scenes in mission resulting from the defeat and retreat of colonial powers all impacted Mennonite Brethren mission theology and philosophy in no small measure. All this seemed to culminate at the Yarrow Convention in

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[78] GCY, 1951, p. 40.

[79] Early references to the Great Commission were almost exclusively to the longer ending of the Markan pericope. Whenever reference to the Matthean text was made, it was restricted to 28:19-20. Cf. GCY, 1951, p. 33.

[80] Hans Kasdorf, "H. W. Lohrenz and Mennonite Brethren Mission," a paper presented at the Lohrenz Symposium, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California, 1983, p. 28.

[81] GCY, 1948, p. 47.

1957. The focus shifted from the missionary as soul-winner to the church as disciple maker; to the centrality of the cross was added the Lordship of Christ; the heretofore assumed deeds of compassion were now being defined as ministry to the whole man.

These were basic concepts for the emergence of a kingdom theology in MB mission thinking. That is not to say, however, that the classic salvationist theology was replaced by a kingdom theology; it was merely complemented by it and became the first layer on which other layers could be built. That is significant for MB mission theology. Its foundations were never shaken as they were, for example, in mission agencies of mainline denominations represented in the International Missionary Council. Here the classical convictions and old urgencies were ignored, if not denied. "No one seemed sure of anything eternal anymore," notes Moffett, and the challenge changed in much of missionary thinking throughout the Western world. The Jerusalem Conference of 1928 put it this way: "Our fathers were impressed with horror that men should die without Christ. We are equally impressed with horror that they should live without Christ."[82] Not so for the Mennonite Brethren.

At the time of the Jerusalem Conference the Mennonite Brethren were theologically still marked much more by spontaneity and event character than by deliberate strategy and theologizing trait. But that changed with the Yarrow Convention in 1957 when the Conference adopted a "Resolution and Statement on a New Approach in Foreign Mission."[83]

> This world-wide revolutionary changes of the post-war era effecting every phase of the international, national, social and religious life of our generation exerts a severe testing upon the missionary accomplishment of the past and its program for the future. The impact of the changes establish beyond question that the time of a fixed routine pattern of mission program to continue for decades has passed. The station-

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[82] Quoted by Moffett, "Theology of Missions," pp. 17-18.

[83] GCY, 1957, pp. 41-43.

> centered mission program has out-lived itself. The assignment of a missionary for a stationary ministry of evangelism with a lifetime to continue in the same place as the central figure of a perpetual program results in a reactionary protest of the nationalistic-conscious native of all lands. With the growing international rejection of all colonial imperialism there has also arisen a principal rejection of the "missionary-centered" gospel ministry.[84]

These "world-wide revolutionary changes," as the Statement put it, demanded adjustments in missionary approach and administrative direction that revolutionized Mennonite Brethren philosophy and theology of mission in unprecedented ways. The merger of the Board of Missions with the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations (discussed earlier) may be seen as a direct result of the 1957 resolution. But here I must focus on the kingdom theology as expressed in recent years.

Theological positions. During the 1970s the Board of Missions and Services updated MB mission principles and policies in the light of Scripture and current theological language. In this process, Paul Hiebert formulated five theological positions. This document is the most concise as well as the most comprehensive statement of Mennonite Brethren kingdom theology from a missiological perspective.[85]

1. Called to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God. This means calling men and women out of the kingdom of this world to become part of the kingdom of the Lord. Although the new birth and conversion constitute the condition to enter the kingdom; although church planting is imperative for spiritual nurture and fellowship, none constitutes the ultimate goal of mission.

> Our ultimate goal is found in the message that Jesus preached--the Good News that the kingdom of God has come (Luke 11:20, Matthew 4:23), that it is open to all who receive it, that it is within us who believe

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[84] GCY, 1957, p. 42.

[85] Paul G. Hiebert, Principles and Policies of the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services, 1977).

> (Luke 17:20), and that it is coming (Acts 1:7). It is for this we are taught to pray (Matthew 6:10). It is God's total order, expressed in the individual, in society and in nature. It is Christlikeness universalized. The ultimate task of the church, therefore, is not to build itself, but to glorify God and to proclaim His kingdom on earth. There is no more worthy calling, no greater task. By comparison, all other tasks are narrow, limited and small.[86]

2. Taking the incarnation as model for communicating the kingdom message. This means that the Mennonite Brethren take the human side of Christ as seriously as the divine. That is, what God did to bring the gospel to humanity. He came in Christ who in turn "became fully human without relinquishing His divinity" (Phil. 2:5-8). Hiebert adds:

> To accept the human dimension implies that we must take seriously the sociocultural processes involved in communicating the gospel and building the church. It is to recognize the need to learn languages well, to identify with people, to allow for differences in the cultural symbols and forms they use to express the gospel, and to trust that the Holy Spirit leads Christians to understand and interpret the gospel in their own cultural settings. To take history seriously is to realize that we must view missions as a process of growth both in individuals and in churches. We need to take seriously the insights we can gain from the study of human beings.[87]

3. Serving as chosen instruments to proclaim God's kingdom here and now. The Mennonite Brethren view the church on the basis of the familyhood and priesthood of all believers, stressing the Believers' Church concept. Therefore, says Hiebert,

> We . . . recognize the right of individual believers and churches to seek under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to understand the Scriptures, and realize that this may lead to differences in the details of our interpretations. This recognition allows us to work with other believers, and to maintain fellowship with our daughter churches even though such differences arise. What holds us together is a deep commitment to search the Bible together, and to follow our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.[88]

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[86] Hiebert, Principles and Policies, pp. 7-8.

[87] Hiebert, Principles and Policies, pp. 8-9.

[88] Hiebert, Principles and Policies, p. 9.

The Mennonite Brethren strive for equality in obedience under the Lordship of Christ. They affirm that older churches and younger churches stand in equal relationship to Christ and are interdependent under his rule. Thus they seek to transcend prejudice, ethnocentrism, and nationalism based on culture, race, and nationality.

4. Receiving spiritual gifts for ministry in God's kingdom. As noted earlier, Mennonite Brethren have not been very strong on pneumatology. But during the last two decades or so there has been a charismatic renewal; they have come to see that the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) as the arrabon or pledge for salvation (Eph. 1:14), is not only the producer of the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23), but also the equipper for ministry through the spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:14; Eph. 4:7-11; Rom. 12:5-8). Hiebert's comment on spiritual gifts for kingdom ministries is noteworthy:

> We take seriously the need to discern the gifts that God has given to our people, to recruit those whose gifts are particularly needed in cross-cultural ministries, to support the development and training of these gifts, and to place the people where their gifts may be most effectively used. Having done so, we entrust them with the ministry.[89]

5. Calling forth leaders in his kingdom to be servants of the King. The emphasis on servanthood leadership is significant. As Hiebert points out:

> Our model of leadership at home and abroad is not taken from the world that stresses authority and manipulation, but from the example and teaching of Christ that emphasizes leadership through servanthood. This spirit should also characterize the relationship of the Board of Missions and Services and the North American Mennonite Brethren churches to the churches with which they work in the task of missions.[90]

Expanded understanding. The Kingdom of God, as understood here, is not merely a future event, but also a present reality. God, in his greatness and power, has broken into

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[89] Hiebert, Principles and Policies, pp. 9-10.

[90] Hiebert, Principles and Policies, p. 10.

history from the outside for the redemption of sinful humankind. With the coming of Jesus, the future has become present. Eschatological hope is being fulfilled. When Jesus appeared in Galilee, he was "preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mk. 1:14-15). In the person of Jesus, the kingdom of God is already "among you" or "within you" (Lk. 17:21). He can do what no one else can: forgive sins on earth (Mk. 2:10), and thereby meet the requirement for membership in God's kingdom.[91]

The biblical view of the kingdom of God transcends three eras of salvation history: (a) the era of preparation delineated in the Old Testament; (b) the era of proclamation which is the "already," the present missionary era between the resurrection and the second coming of Jesus; and (c) the era of consummation, or the eschatological era which is the "not-yet" of the future kingdom (Figure 19).[92] The kingdom of God has come and is already here; the kingdom of God is coming, because it is not yet consummated in the salvation historical plan of God. Therein lies the dialectical tension of history and the kingdom of God. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Mt. 24:14).

Kingdom theology is christologically anchored in the Lordship of Christ which came into much sharper focus during the late 1950s and 1960s. J. B. Toews, for instance, argues that a theology of mission "has its cornerstone in the glorified Christ," whereas Lohrenz, Janzen, and others before him, had argued for the centrality of the crucified Christ. Toews bases his emphasis of Christ's Lordship on the teachings of Jesus and Paul, just as other MB mission leaders prior to

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[91] Cf. David Bosch, Witness to the World, pp. 64-65; Hans Kasdorf, At the Dawn of Millennium Three: Christian Mission in Context (Scottdale: Herald Press, forthcoming), pp. 49-53.

[92] Kasdorf, At the Dawn of Millennium Three, p. 51; Kasdorf, It's Sunrise, p. 31.

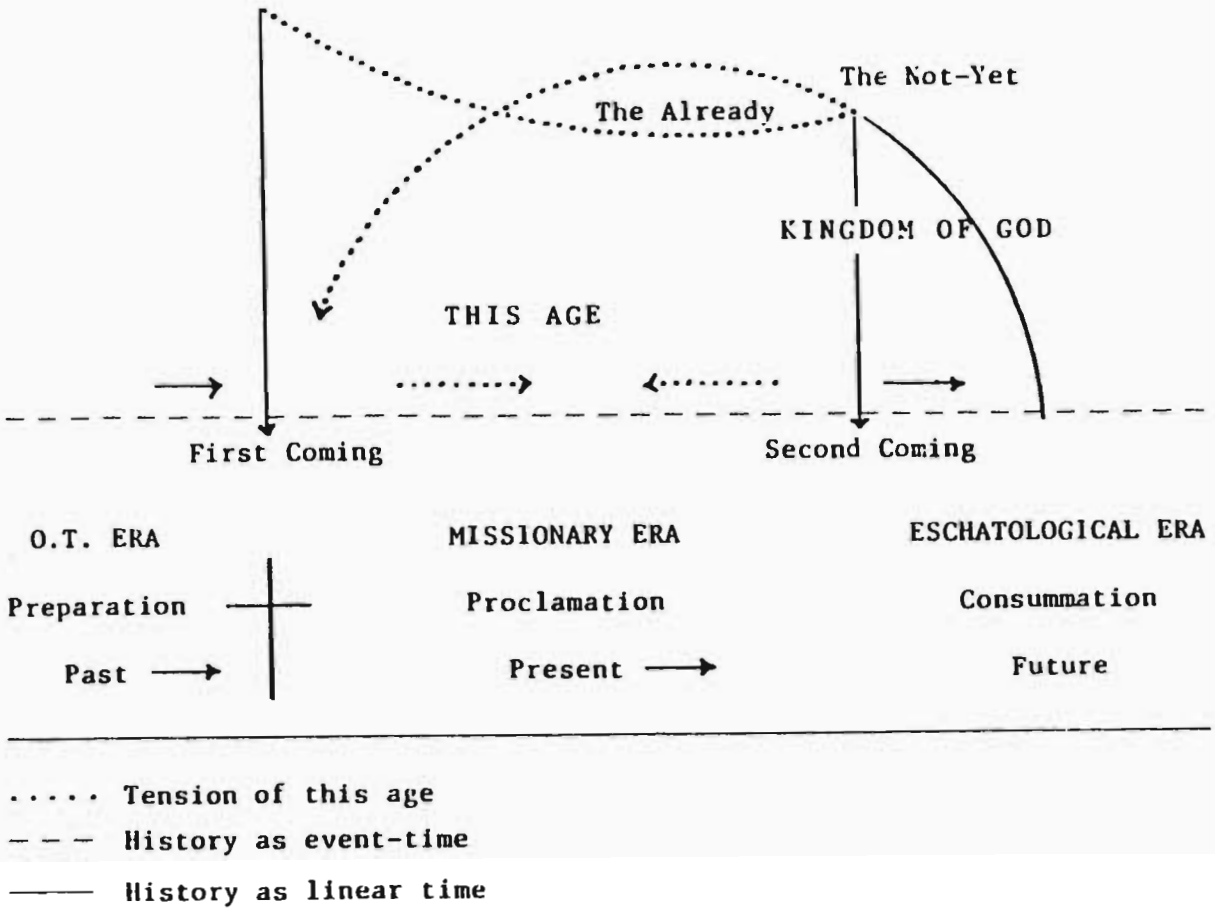

Figure 19

Mission in the Context of Salvation History

Source: Hans Kasdorf, It's Sunrise in World Mission, p. 23.

1957 had based their focus of the Saviorhood of Christ on the same teachings. Toews writes:

> The missionary assignment of His redeemed church has its basis in the proclamation of Christ's lordship established through His life, death, resurrection and exaltation. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20). Paul, the apostle, expresses the lordship of Christ in his petition for the church at Ephesus that the believers may know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:19-23).[93]

This relatively recent focus on the Lordship of Christ must be seen in larger context of General Conference activities. In 1966 the Conference founded the Board of Christian Literature for the purpose of coordinating the promotion, production and dissemination of good literature at home and abroad.[94] This Board accepted its task within the total Conference agenda as a serious challenge. Such subsequent Conference decisions as the establishment of a Historical Commission in 1969,[95] the appointment of a General Conference Archivist in 1972,[96] and the founding of a Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies with headquarters in Fresno, California,[97] under the directorship of J. B. Toews

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[93] Toews, "Theology of Mission in Acts," pp. 2-3.

[94] GCY, 1966, pp. 28-29; cf. this study Chapter 11, Table 4.

[95] GCY, 1969, p. 100.

[96] GCY, 1972, pp. 149-150, 160.

[97] J. B. Toews, "Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies," Christian Leader 40 (March 29, 1977), 13, 16.

can be attributed indirectly--if not directly--to the aggressive vision of men and women heading the Board of Christian Literature.

In cooperation with Kindred Press, its young publishing zealot, this Board carefully selects, guards, and promotes the production of literature that reflects the distinctive character of the Anabaptist/Mennonite Brethren legacy of the Believers' Church. It is precisely this focus that has highlighted the dimension of discipleship and the Lordship of Jesus Christ in MB mission literature in general and in MB mission theology in particular. That is not to suggest that either Mennonite Brethren mission thinkers and practitioners prior to 1957 negated the Lordship of Christ, or that those during and after the revolutionary mission era of the 1950s and 1960s disregarded the soteriological dimension in the cross and death of Christ. To do so would be a serious error. But the earlier records focus on the Lordship of Christ more by implication while the recent writings are more explicit. In kingdom theology the missionary not only calls people to accept Jesus as Savior; he or she also tells them what it means to follow him as Lord.

The Trinitarian Theology

As I have shown in the first part of this chapter, Mennonite Brethren have always adhered to the classical corpus of theological confessions. But only in recent years have they made their trinitarian orientation more explicit as theology of mission. Since the topic has been discussed earlier, a few comments will suffice here.

The document entitled Mennonite Brethren Missions in the 1980s states:

> God himself takes the initiative in world mission. It is first and foremost his task. God sent his Son to seek, to save and to serve, and in so doing became himself the first missioner. God sent because he loved: that love is still a liberating force. Jesus died that he might save; that event is still a historical fact.[98]

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[98] Mennonite Brethren Missions in the 1980s (Winnipeg: Board of Missions/Services, [1985]), p. 1.

The first three theological themes of that document highlight the trinitarian mission: (a) the mission of God, (b) the mandate of Christ, and (c) the ministry of the Holy Spirit.[99]

The focus is on sentness: "As you sent me into the world," said the Son to the Father, "I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). After his resurrection Jesus explicitly said to the disciples: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Then he added, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:21-22). Here is a mystery in mission: God the sender is himself the sent one. Early authentic missionary action, notes Wilbert Shenk, derives from the mission of the Trinity (John 1:1-16; 3:16-18; 6:47-56; 17:18; 20:21-22).[100] That mission is God giving himself; it is God moving into the world, in his Son and Spirit.[101]

There is, as it were, a divinely negotiating interaction within the Holy Trinity about sentness to the world; there is also a divine sending, the realistic activation of mission to the world: the Father sent the Son, the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit empowers the Church for its task of crossing frontiers toward the world.[102] G. W. Peters has put it in the following words:

> The triune God in His very being as Spirit, light and love is an outgoing God, a missionary God, ever sending Himself in benevolent relations to mankind, ever searching in love to bestow Himself in blessings upon mankind, and ever spending Himself in great sacrifice to make man's salvation possible. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are cooperating and coordinating to bring man back from his sinful wandering and blundering, and restore man to his pristine state, purpose, destiny and glory. Our God is, indeed, the God of our salvation.[103]

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[99] Missions in the 1980s, pp. 1-3.

[100] Cf. Shenk, Theology of Mission, p. 2.

[101] Bosch, Witness to the World, p. 239.

[102] See my note on "mission as sentness" and Figure 1, Chapter 1 of this study, pp. 8-9.

[103] Peters, Theology of Missions, p. 81.

The trinitarian approach to a theology of mission has three theological foci: The Father initiates mission because he loves the world; the Son ventures out on his mission because he is sent; the Holy Spirit executes mission because he is the Spirit of wisdom and power. Samuel Moffett makes this observation on the difference between love for the world and obedience to the Lord:

> The motive of the Son, the missionary, is obedience. Look at the glimpse that Paul gives us into the mind of Christ before His mission. Philippians. The lesson is not love. The lesson is humility and obedience, even unto the death at the cross. He loves the world, of course, but He goes because He is sent. He loves the whole world, but He goes to the Jews because He is sent. That is the only explanation He gives of the apparent narrowness of His mission. "I'm not sent, but to the lost sheep in Israel." He loves the world enough to die for it, but He goes to the cross because He is sent. ("Not my will, but Thine be done.") It seems to me that the compelling, insistent motive of mission--a going mission--is obedience. God is love, but it was Christ's obedience that forged and focused and incarnated that love into a mission.[104]

The obedience of Christ was no legalistic obedience, but obedience of humility. Such obedience is even more central to the mission of the church than obedience of faith which I discussed earlier.

The trinitarian approach in Mennonite Brethren mission theology does not weaken, but strengthens both their salvationist theology and their kingdom theology. If the salvationist theology is rooted in the love of God and the cross of Christ, and if the kingdom theology is based on the Lordship of Christ and servanthood ministry, then the trinitarian approach is anchored in both, God's love for the world and Christ's humble obedience to the Father. Thus when love is activated by obedience and obedient action is empowered by the Spirit, then the servant missionary can cross frontiers and witness with confidence to the world--witness by word and deed, by life and death.

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[104] Moffett, "Theology of Missions," p. 22.

An Emerging Mission Philosophy

Prior to the Yarrow Convention Mennonite Brethren made their missional statements in propositional formulations which they authenticated by deeds of compassion, but about which they said very little; their deeds spoke for themselves. But suddenly during the late 1950s and on through the 1970s they felt evident need to defend their position on social responsibility and to define their message of mission in wholistic terms.

Tracing the Process

Several steps can be clearly identified in the development of a Mennonite Brethren mission philosophy since 1957.

New rhetoric from Yarrow 1957. Administrators and policy makers have issued a number of revolutionary documents on philosophy of mission, but none as radical as the "Statement of the General Conference of the MB Church on the Effects of the Changes of Our Age on the World-Wide Missionary Assignment." Such words as "revision," "change," "adjustment," and "corporate judgment" became standard mission vocabulary in the new administrative policies.[105] What is required, says the document, are "new standards of qualifications of missionaries" and "new methods in some areas of the work. A hesitancy on our part to consider such needed changes may result in a loss which will far exceed the values which we hope to preserve by avoiding the required adjustment."[106] The agenda seemed to be clear and the administration determined to carry it out expeditiously.

The declaration from Corn 1966. The spirit of change was in the air because of "the changing world of our time," as the "Statement of Mission: Forward Thrust" put it.[107] Whoever moved in the atmosphere of mission inhaled some of

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[105] Cf. GCY, 1957, pp. 41-43.

[106] GCY, 1957, p. 43.

[107] GCY, 1966, p. 104.

that spirit. Leaders from conciliar and nonconciliar churches alike were redefining their understanding of mission. From Mexico City came the call for "mission on six continents";[108] from Berlin came the challenge of "urgency and relevancy of evangelism";[109] from Wheaton came the declaration on "the church's worldwide mission."[110] Thus it seems only appropriate that the Mennonite Brethren would take note of these new winds of change which had, as the Declaration from Corn put it, "far-reaching influences on the total missionary outreach of our brotherhood."[111] The Brethren stated:

> Much confusion exists today as to what constitutes evangelism and missions, but as a Mennonite Brethren brotherhood we re-affirm our understanding of the missionary mandate as being a ministry to the whole man, with the primary purpose of preaching the gospel, to make disciples, to baptize them, to gather them into churches, and to lead them on in the knowledge of Christ.[112]

Because of the merger of the Board of Missions and the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations, the Corn Convention was of great historical significance for the formulation of an MB philosophy of mission. The Board of Reference and Counsel put it succinctly: "The merger of the two boards . . . represents the conviction that proclamation and welfare ministries ought to be integrated." Yet

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[108] Wolfgang Günther, Von Edinburg nach Mexico City: Die ekklesiologischen Bemühungen der Weltmissions-Konferenzen (Stuttgart: Ev. Missionsverlag, 1970), pp. 128-132; Charles W. Ranson, "Mexico City 1963," International Review of Missions 53 (1964), 137-146.

[109] GCY, 1966, p. 104. For the Berlin documents see Carl F. H. Henry and W. Stanley Mooneyham, eds., One Race, One Gospel, One Task, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1967).

[110] Cf. Harold Lindsell, ed., The Church's Worldwide Mission (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1966), pp. 215-238.

[111] GCY, 1966, p. 104. For the complete declaration see pp. 103-104.

[112] GCY, 1966, p. 104.

"welfare concerns, however necessary, are subsidiary to proclamation."[113]

Here the Mennonite Brethren articulated for the first time what they had practiced throughout their missionary endeavors, namely, "ministry to the whole man." But now it became an integral part of their explicit rhetoric in mission philosophy.

Commitment in Vancouver 1969. In keeping with the spirit of sociocultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, the Conference convened under the banner of "Confrontation." The ferment of the times was evident throughout the Convention.[114] In the midst of this, the new General Secretary of Missions and Services challenged the delegates to encourage one another, to rededicate themselves, and to redouble their efforts of confronting the world with Christ. He continued by saying,

> We will commit ourselves anew to the people of many nations whom we seek to win, love, and serve. We will concentrate on learning to know them and the settings in which they live. We must be flexible enough to realize that it is God, and not North America, that is building his church with methods appropriate to each generation and each country. We will be careful to create programs that can be naturally assimilated by the national church or that can be cancelled without the disruption of the church. . . . In all that we do, we will be clear in our top priority: winning people for Christ and the establishment of His church. All other ministries are important, but subordinate to this. . . . So, we have an opportunity in five continents. An opportunity to share the Good News and to help those in need.[115]

The commitment in Vancouver was twofold: (a) To the mission of God. It is his work, not that of the Mennonite Brethren. He builds the church and he confronts the world.

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[113] GCY, 1966, p. 23.

[114] See especially the recommendations and resolutions presented in the various components of the report of the Board of Reference and Counsel. GCY, 1969, pp. 10-12, 87-88.

[115] GCY, 1969, pp. 49-50.

But he uses MB people to do so. (b) To evangelism and social services. The Mennonite Brethren have the opportunity to share the good news and to help people in need on five continents of the world.

The Resolution from Reedley 1972. No single statement on record is as explicit on social services as the "Resolution on Proclamation of the Gospel and Christian Social Responsibility" formulated by the Board of Reference and Counsel. Because of its significance, the document merits full quotation:

> According to the Scriptures, fallen man can be saved from his desperate plight only through faith in Jesus Christ--a faith which comes by hearing the gospel (John 14, Romans 10). Believers are, therefore, called to proclaim the gospel by preaching, teaching, writing, testifying, confessing, etc. (Mt. 10, Mt. 28, Romans 10).
>
> The effects of man's sinful state are also to be observed in man's misery-sickness, death, hunger, disaster and violence of many sorts. Our Lord's compassion was poured out in ministering to these needs of men as untiringly He healed the lepers, the blind, the paralytic, and the crippled (the Gospels). The hope of redemption at the resurrection includes the body (Romans 8). The significance of ministering to the needs of man in a social-economic order of life finds eloquent expression in our Lord's parable of the final judgment (Mt. 25). Our saving faith is tested on the basis of our deeds of love to men (Gal. 5-6).
>
> We therefore affirm:
>
> (1) That we recognize Christ's call to His followers to include both proclamation (evangelization) and social action (alleviating human suffering and misery in the world).
>
> (2) That according to Scripture and the example of our Lord, we regard the proclamation of the gospel and social action to be inseparable tasks for the believing community in any location in the world. It is understood that sometimes proclamation, sometimes social action, takes chronological precedence. It is also understood that while both are required by our Lord, without proclamation men cannot be saved.
>
> (3) That the statements of priority should be stated according to the scriptural pattern, "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" (Mt. 6). This priority (seeking first God's rule and His righteousness in our lives and in the world through Christ) comprises both proclamation and social action and, in Scripture, is placed over against man's preoccupation with selfish concerns (what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or what shall we wear?).

It was moved, seconded and carried to accept the above resolution.[116]

The search for wholeness in Buhler 1978. Integration of spiritual and social ministries is biblically sound and theologically significant. But during the 1970s shift in verbal emphasis went a step further. The General Secretary declared at the Buhler Convention in 1978:

> Our Priorities are an expression of what we believe our mission to be. We have placed the highest priority on evangelism, church planting, and on indigenization of the national churches. We have not always understood when and how to achieve this. Our commitment to leadership development receives support through scholarships for individuals. We seek to be true to our commitment of service in our mission by integrating word and deed. Our ministries in Bangladesh through the M.C.C., in Nepal through the medical work of The Evangelical Alliance Mission, and in Afghanistan under International Assistance Mission, are small but firm footholds in building the Church of Jesus Christ. Our involvement with Canadian International Development Agency (C.I.D.A.) funds has helped us to strengthen our ministry to people with economic needs.[117]

Interpreting the Philosophy

What is most evident in Mennonite Brethren theology and philosophy of mission from 1957 to 1984 is the tension between evangelism and social concern.

Reaffirming priorities. It is striking how often the Brethren have felt the need to reaffirm the priority of evangelism as a quick review of the records will show.

1. At the 1960 Centennial Convention in Reedley the Conference adopted as part of a longer resolution that "in consideration of the great spiritual urgency of our day to complete the assignment of Christ to 'preach the gospel to every creature' . . . the Mennonite Brethren Church . . . renew its dedication to the sacred assignment of the world evangelization committed to the Church by our risen and

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[116] GCY, 1972, pp. 8-9.

[117] GCY, 1978, p. 67.

ascending Lord who calls us 'to finish His work.'"[118]

2. In view of the postwar tendency of institutionalization of foreign mission, the Board of Missions expressed concern at the 1963 Convention in Winnipeg "that the primacy of direct evangelism be not overshadowed by institutionalism or social and cultural concerns in our brotherhood and mission enterprise, important and attractive as they may be."[119]

3. When the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations merged with the Board of Missions to form the Board of Missions and Services in Corn, Oklahoma in 1966, the Conference issued a special "Statement of Principles," and affirmed its belief "that the proclamation of the Gospel is the primary task of the church."[120]

4. In 1969 the language was again stronger. A statement of Conference priorities said: "In all we do, we will be clear in our top priority: winning people for Christ and the establishment of His church. All other ministries are important, but subordinate to this."[121]

5. At the conference in Reedley in 1972 the General Secretary stated that the Mennonite Brethren were free to reaffirm their priorities. He then added:

> We will affirm our priority of church-planting evangelism. In this hour of mission opportunity we will stick close to the Word that teaches that all men are lost and that there is no other name in heaven or earth than Jesus whereby men may be saved.[122]

6. In 1975 the Board of Missions/Services asked the Conference to endorse as mission priority "to evangelize and plant churches."[123] In 1978 the Chairman of the Board reiterated the "highest priority of evangelism, church

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[118] GCY, 1960, p. 97.

[119] GCY, 1963, p. 60.

[120] GCY, 1966, p. 23.

[121] GCY, 1969, p. 50.

[122] GCY, 1972, p. 27.

[123] GCY, 1975, p. 108.

planting, and indigenization of national churches."[124] Three years later he focused on "telling the good news" and on being agents of reconciliation.[125] The same concern was underscored in 1984 when the Chairman declared at the Convention in Reedley that the Board of Missions and Services continues to affirm its belief "in the priority of evangelism and church planting."[126]

As noted in the documents cited, such phrases as "highest priority on evangelism," "commitment to leadership development of nationals," "integration of word and deed," "telling the good news," and "whole-man ministries" occur with increasing frequency in the denomination's mission rhetoric from the late 1950s onward.[127]

The concern for whole-man-ministry. The definition of whole-man ministry is not only striking theologically, but indicating another step in the shifting paradigm from a salvationistic to a service-oriented theology. A current pamphlet of promotional literature distributed by Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services states categorically: "Helping people in physical need has always been stressed by Missions/ Services as integral to the Church's mission to the world." The rationale given is the example of Jesus, the authenticity such service gives to the gospel, and the prohibition by many countries of an overt gospel witness while welcoming physical and social ministries. Describing the funding of this program, the pamphlet informs the constituency:

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[124] GCY, 1978, p. 67.

[125] GCY, 1981, p. 97.

[126] GCY, 1984, p. 38.

[127] A few selected items must suffice here, lest the reference list become a bibliographical appendix. Cf. GCY, 1969, p. 47; 1972, pp. 24, 27; 1975, p. 62; 1978, pp. 66-67; 1981, p. 99; 1984, pp. 38, 40; Missions in the 1980s, pp. 8-10; promotional pamphlets, Mennonite Brethren Missions/ Services, Helping people in Need [1984] Telling the Good News [1984] and Equipping the Church [1984]. For complete reference see bibliography.

> Of the total Missions/Services budget ($5,502,000 in 1982/83), 18.5% is given to whole-man ministries--9.6% for relief, education and development programs, and 8.9% for medical work. A significant part of these funds come from the Canadian International Development Agency (a federal government program), and from the provincial governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan. All three sources match mission contributions to approved projects on a one-to-one basis; for each dollar given by the church constituency, one will come from the government.[128]

Critical questions. It is neither the intention nor the motivation for mission, but the interpretation and understanding of the Word of God as the missionary message for the world that calls for two critical questions.

First, is not the concept, "whole-man ministry" as defined in the promotional literature, misleading? The introductory statement informs the supporting constituency that the goal of Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services is (a) telling the good news, (b) forming indigenous fellowships of believers, and (c) helping people in need. The last category is then defined as "whole-man ministries." The entire pamphlet is devoted to explain and illustrate what that means. But what is really wholistic about helping people in need when it is separated from evangelism and church planting? The pamphlet is correct: "Compassion is part of every missionary's mandate in each of the 24 [27] countries in which Missions/Services works." But to call "special development, educational and medical programs" which have been implemented in seven of those countries "whole-man ministries" is misleading, even if unintentionally so.

Second, is not the language of prioritization in whole-man-ministry, in actual fact, polarization? Another promotional pamphlet entitled, Telling the Good News, states that "Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services stresses

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[128] For complete reference see preceding footnote item, Helping People in Need.

evangelism as its first priority."[129] Such language is confusing. If the gospel is central in mission, there is neither a need to prioritize the proclamation of the gospel nor to defend ministries of a social dimension. The kerygma of God's Word for souls and the diakonia of good works as service to the body are integral components of whole-man-ministry to people in the world. Where, on the one hand, there is only kerygma when people suffer from desperate physical hardships or political oppression the missionary message is exposed to emaciation and thereby placed in jeopardy of losing its credibility.[130] But the reverse is also true: Where, on the other hand, the missionary message is reduced to a mere diakonia of horizontal concerns without confronting men and women with the claims of Christ for the salvation of their sinful being it is no more than a diluted gospel without the power to save the soul.[131] As soon as one is neglected at the expense of the other, there is no longer whole-man-ministry.

In all mission reports and resolutions adopted by the Conference between 1954 and 1984 the focus is on establishing the priority of proclamation over social concern. But why, we must ask, did the Brethren feel the need for repeated defense of prioritization? Were they afraid of losing credibility in the supporting constituency? Or was there an inherent fear within the nature of the emphasis on social concern that the redemptive message so central in salvationist theology would erode and become diluted by the added emphasis of social ministries? Whatever the reasons may be, the tension between evangelism and social concern is obvious, a tension which the Mennonite Brethren have never been able to resolve.

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[129] For complete reference see footnote #127 item, Telling the Good News.

[130] For a treatment of proclamation and social concern see Bosch, Witness to the World, pp. 203-211.

[131] Bosch, Witness to the World, pp. 212-220.

An attempted solution. It appears that the problem lies in the understanding or meaning which the Mennonite Brethren have traditionally attached to the concepts of evangelism and mission. The two terms are not synonymous; they are different, but related. In Chapter 1, I have defined mission as the total redemptive task for which the Lord has placed the church into the world. That task has to do with crossing frontiers of all types, frontiers that pose barriers between the people of God and the people of the world. Once those frontiers have been crossed, the church witnesses of God's redemptive, healing, and helping grace on the other side of those frontiers. In this sense, "mission means being sent by God to love, to serve, to preach, to teach, to heal."[132] This includes evangelism; but evangelism is a much narrower concept than mission.

Evangelism means to tell the good news that Jesus saves; it means to invite men and women in the world to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior; it means to inform them of the cost of following Jesus. Evangelism always aims at discipleship, which in turn requires commitment to Jesus as King, a commitment to his purposes of the kingdom in history.[133] Bosch states it succinctly:

> Evangelism is the core, heart or centre of mission; it consists in the proclamation of salvation in Christ to non-believers, in announcing forgiveness of sin, in calling people to repentance and faith in Christ, in inviting them to become living members in Christ's earthly community, and to begin a life in the power of the Holy Spirit.[134]

There is, then, no mission without evangelism, for evangelism is the heart of mission; it is not the priority of mission. As soon as we prioritize, we also dichotomize; we are left with the impression that we have a choice to make; we can do one and leave the other undone. But when we view evangelism as central to mission, then we have no choice but to evangelize as we missionize.

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[132] Bosch, "Mission and Evangelism," p. 169.

[133] Bosch, "Mission and Evangelism," p. 172.

[134] Bosch, "Mission and Evangelism," p. 170.

PART FIVE

An Appraisal:

Review, Achievements, Challenges

Chapter 14

CONCLUSION: ACHIEVED BUT NOT ARRIVED

Introduction

This chapter marks the conclusion of the present study, but makes no claim of being conclusive: Mennonite Brethren Mission thinking is dynamic and ongoing. While much ground has been covered, there is still territory left uncovered; while I have diligently attempted to discover the why, the how, and the what of Mennonite Brethren mission involvement, I have not sought to focus on the whence, the when, and the where of that mission. In other words, I have not traced their story of mission in chronological order, covering movement after movement in country after country. That was not my intent and must remain a future task for the historian to perform. Nonetheless, I have treated my subject matter in historical perspective and thereby given a dynamic frame of reference which has been conducive for both critical and theological reflections on the course of a hundred years of Mennonite Brethren mission thinking.

While the historian might have reflected critically on the history of MB mission, the missiologist must reflect critically on the mission of MB history. That is what I have endeavored to do. That is also what I will do in this chapter. But here I must shift my focus from research and analysis to summaries, reflections, and appraisals of what I have found and what still needs to be researched. Three areas will cover that objective: (a) I will review historically and summarily what has been done; (b) I will then present some conclusions which I have reached on the basis of the present study; and (c) in the final section I will point out areas in Mennonite Brethren mission which have heretofore received either inadequate or no attention in scholarly research and, therefore, present a challenge to the present generation of the denomination's mission students and missionaries.

Historical Review

No ecclesiastical or sectarian movement was ever born in a vacuum. Each had its moment of conception and each a given time of embryonic maturation in the womb of historical forces. Such forces may be cultural or spiritual, social or political or a combination of various factors that eventually culminate in a birthing process, separating the child from its mother. The struggle for survival is often violent and life-threatening. The Protestant Reformation of sixteenth-century Europe with all its children and stepchildren, including the Anabaptist-Mennonite movement, is one such example in the annals of ecclesiastical history. The revitalization movements in the Ukraine of Southern Russia where the Mennonite Brethren emerged more than 300 years later is another example. Though much smaller in scale than the Reformation and though seldom noted by writers of church history, it has provided the basis and generated sufficient interest for the present study.

Legacy and Pilgrimage

The Mennonite Brethren have their historical roots and theological orientation in the Believers' Church tradition which found its clearest biblical articulation among the evangelical Anabaptists of the Reformation period. This was basically a lay movement with a unique missionary vision and dynamic evangelistic witness in the world. But severe persecution and political oppression by ecclesiastical and civil authorities as well as internal divisiveness and legalistic tendencies created a spirit of complacent maintenance instead of courageous mission. By the time the Mennonites began moving from Prussia to Russia in 1789, they had become the Stillen im Lande. They spared their words to express their faith; they did few deeds to speak of.

During their pilgrimage in Russia they took on ethno-religious traits that resembled more the territorial state church which their forefathers had once rejected than the Believers' Church which the Anabaptists had become. The Mennonites in the Ukraine were, in effect, a culturally

isolated micro state church within the Czarist macro church state whose political protection they enjoyed but whose spiritual life they did not touch. Although progressive in agriculture, education, and industry, their spiritual life was at an all-time low just prior to spiritual renewal during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Revival and New Life

The Mennonite Brethren Church was born in the midst of a revival movement which burst out sporadically rather than in a continuous stream between 1834 and 1865 throughout the Mennonite and Lutheran colonies of the Ukraine. The origin of these revitalization dynamics can be traced back to three sources in Western Europe. The first was the Flemish/ Mennonite congregation of Brenkenhofswalde and Franztal in the Neumark of Brandenburg in Prussia. Through mutual interest and interaction between Herrnhut and Halle Pietists and the Prussian Mennonites, Brenkenhofswalde embraced a spirit of openness and ecumenicity unique for its time in the eighteenth century. The result was both spiritual renewal and cultural revitalization. Thus when the entire congregation emigrated to Russia in 1834 and established the Gnadenfeld colony and church in the Molotschna a year later, it spontaneously transplanted a dynamic revival movement from Prussia to the Mennonites already living in Russia.

The second source of the revival goes back to Württemberg Pietism in South Germany. Lutheran Separatists of the Neuhoffnung settlement by the Sea of Azov, not far east of the Molotschna colonies, invited Pfarrer Eduard Wüst from Stuttgart to be their pastor. Wüst arrived there in the early part of 1845. His fiery preaching of repentance and dynamic zeal for mission created no small disturbance among the Lutherans and fanned the revival fires among the Mennonites of Gnadenfeld to unprecedented flames which rapidly spread to other colonies.

But there was a third source of the Mennonites of renewal in Russia which had its roots in the German Baptist movement of Hamburg. Founded by Johann G. Oncken in 1838,

this young movement was evangelistically and missionarily aggressive and dynamic. This was less a direct cause than a reinforcement of the revival already in progress. Its influence came first to the Mennonites in Chortitza, particularly through literature distribution and through correspondence between Abraham Unger of Einlage and Johann Oncken of Hamburg. It also affected the Mennonites in other areas.

As the winds of God's renewing Spirit moved from various directions into the settlements of Southern Russia, they brought refreshing rain to the spiritually parched grounds of ecclesiastically orthodox Mennonitism. This led to new life and the birth of the Mennonite Brethren Church on January 18, 1860, in the village of Elisabethtal of the Molotschna colony. Eighteen men signed the Document of Secession and thereby founded a new church, a vigorous missionary movement as had not been known among the Mennonites since their Anabaptist forbears of the Reformation era.

Struggles and Victory

When the Mennonite Brethren embarked on their own course of history, they experienced untold opposition. The ethnoreligious, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical structures of Mennonite institutionalism were their greatest enemies. Mennonite authorities resorted to harsh measures of physical, material, and psychological oppression, to deprive the new movement of its historical privileges and protective rights under the Czarist regime. Had it not been for the gracious support of men like Bernard Fast and Johann Harder, elders and spiritual leaders within the institutional Mennonite Church, the Brethren might not have survived. Letters and other documents submitted by these men to the authorities on behalf of the Brethren were of great help to Johann Claassen in his diplomatic negotiations to acquire recognition of the Mennonite Brethren from the government in St. Petersburg.

In addition to oppression and persecution from without, there were threatening forces to destroy the movement from within. Most devastating was the so-called Fröhliche

Richtung or exuberant movement. Under authoritarian domination of a few men, this group exercised "freedom of the spirit" to the point of shouting, dancing, kissing, and drumming in worship services. Such practices were totally alien to sober-minded Mennonites of the nineteenth century and could not be tolerated. The conflict lasted five years. Finally, in 1865 came victory: (a) the Fröhliche Richtung was overcome through the June Reform of the New Church; (b) the Mennonite Brethren gained official recognition from the Czarist government as a legitimate Anabaptist-Mennonite church with all rights and privileges granted to the Mennonites in Russia by the Manifesto of Catherine the Great in 1763, affirmed by Paul I in 1800. They could now move forward with confidence and courage.

Witness and Mission

The historical record gives ample evidence that the Mennonite Brethren were not only born as a vigorous missionary movement; they also continued to expand as such, first in Russia and then in America. Their missionary mentality was profoundly shaped by movements such as the Pietists, Moravians, Baptists, and Stundisten. They nurtured their evangelistic zeal through literature and Bible studies, and promoted a missionary spirit through Missionsfeste or mission festivals. Soon they crossed frontiers to witness of God's grace in their lives; they witnessed to their own people and to German colonists, to Russian peasants and aristocrats, to tribal peoples of northern wastelands and to city dwellers in the Ukraine. Despite legal prohibition, the Brethren evangelized even among people of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The most dynamic missionary ventures in Russia were their Reisepredigtdienst or itinerant evangelism founded in 1872, their move to India initiated in 1885-89, and the Zeltmission established as an outgrowth of the Soldatenverein during World War I. Although the cost was enormous in that a number of missionaries were executed or perished in other ways, the Brethren were willing to pay the price of the martyr

witness. In the early years of the Soviet regime and during Stalin's great purge, the Mennonite Brethren Church mission was officially terminated--as were all other missionary efforts of evangelical churches in the Soviet Union. Yet their power witness goes on to this day.

Emigration and Expansion

Many Mennonites began to emigrate to America when Alexander II issued a new law of conscription and enforced his program of Russification. The first Mennonite Brethren settled on the prairie states of the Midwest and from there spread to other parts of the continent. Here they were free to nurture their evangelistic spirit and expand their missionary vision. At first they continued to do what they had learned in Russia: they engaged itinerant evangelists for Seelsorge and Seelenrettung and conducted Missionsfeste to sense what God was doing in the world and what he wanted them to do. The German Baptists were instrumental in helping the Brethren find an outlet for mission and thus collected funds and recruited workers for their own work in India and Africa. But that relationship did not last for many years.

At their Convention in 1896, the Mennonite Brethren took aggressive measures to establish their own foreign mission work. Through the counsel of the Brethren in Russia who had already been missionizing in Southern India for some time, the Americans decided to establish a mission station among the Telugu people in the same general area. In 1899 they commissioned the N. N. Hieberts as their first missionaries to India.

In the meantime, they had begun work among the Comanche Indians in Oklahoma, and in 1907 decided to open a new work in Minneapolis. Thus within a little more than a decade the Mennonite Brethren had undertaken three major mission projects that were now under the direction of the Committee for Foreign Mission founded in 1896: (a) the Indian mission at Post Oak in Oklahoma; (b) the Telugu mission in India; and (c) the South Side mission in Minneapolis. These remained the only Conference mission programs until 1919 when the

Mennonite Brethren accepted the South China Mission as their project.

Structures and Resources

The Mennonite Brethren founded their first major mission structure in 1885. The purpose was to have a committee that would receive donations and manage mission funds for the Conference. Since they had no mission of their own, they supported Baptist missions and indigenous evangelists in India. Once they sent out their own workers, they drafted a charter with bylaws and in 1900 became incorporated in the State of Kansas as the American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union. The entire Conference was registered as a mission society. This was really the church in mission.

With growth of interests in other areas, it became necessary to revise the constitution and to restructure both the mission and the Conference organization, a subject I have treated at length in Chapters 9 and 11.

The Mennonite Brethren have been remarkably successful in generating sufficient mission interest within the denomination to sustain a high level of foreign mission involvement in terms of both financial and human resources. This speaks of an inherent spiritual quality of the missionary dimension and the missionary intention of the church.

People and Programs

The dynamic of the missionary spirit cannot be confined to official programs established and assumed by the Conference. Numerous independent men and women found the Conference either too slow to move or its boundaries too narrow for operation. Thus they ventured out on their own: the Frank Wienses established the South China Mission among the Hakkas, the Aaron Janzens founded the Kafumba Mission in the Congo where also the Henry Bartsches started the Bololo Mission supported by the Canadian-based Afrika Missions-Verein. Other programs, such as the Western Children's Mission, the work in Colombia and Brazil, as well as Licht den Indianern in Paraguay were all independently started

and eventually taken over by the Conference.

By 1945 the Mennonite Brethren had officially assumed mission work in seven countries--including the United States--and had a working team of fifty missionaries. That was the year when World War II came to an end and the golden age of MB mission was ushered in. The spiritual renewal was so powerful that the Mennonite Brethren missionary force increased from fifty in 1945 to 102 in 1946, or by 104 percent in one year. The dynamic lasted for about twenty years, reached a plateau for some time and then began to decline.

Two of the most significant events during this time was the merger of the Mennonite Brethren and the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren in 1960, and the amalgamation of the Board of Missions and the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations in 1966, to form the present Board of Missions and Services. In 1984 Mennonite Brethren were missionarily active in twenty-seven countries with a mission team of 179 persons and a budget of over five million dollars.

Modest Achievements

At the beginning of this study I set certain goals for myself which I hoped to achieve. Now it is time to take stock of what I actually have accomplished. In the process of examining and analyzing boxes upon boxes full of primary sources and of reading other materials, I discovered some of the "hidden things" which were new to me about my own denomination. That in itself is an achievement when it leads to corrective action. But I have also made modest--not to say significant--achievement in clarifying Mennonite Brethren mission thinking and action in terms of motivation, philosophy, theology, strategy, methodology, and objectives. I want to lift out only those areas which in my judgment are historically of significance for the present generation in mission.

Moorings of the Missional Legacy

As I have shown in Chapters 3, 5, and 8, Mennonite Brethren mission thinking not only has been shaped by a host of external forces, it is also anchored in a rich missional legacy. Of the eight influences I have listed in Chapter 5, at least five have some connection with the Anabaptist heritage, two are exclusively Pietistic, and one lodges in the Baptist movement. A closer look, however, shows that even the Mennonite teacher Tobias Voth who introduced the Missionsfest to the Mennonites in Russia in the 1820s, the Brenkenhofswalde connection, and the Gnadenfeld congregation all received their missional impetus from the Pietists. God used these three channels to transmit the Pietist missionary zeal for the quickening of the missional spirit among the Mennonites in Russia. Thus the overwhelming renewal in mission among the Mennonite Brethren in Russia had its roots in Pietist mission dynamics.

In America it was somewhat different. The Brethren already brought what they had from their experience in Russia. They also interacted with other Mennonite groups who were beginning to show interest in mission. In addition, they received some impulse from the American Baptists for work in India and from representatives of the Berlin Baptist Mission Society for work in Cameroon. The relationship, however, was not a happy one; it is not clear from the records how long the influence lasted. Their experience in India as well as their early connection with the China Mennonite Mission Society and the Congo Inland Mission suggests a growing affinity with other Mennonites rather than with Baptists.

Heroic Commitment of Individuals

The history of the Anabaptist movement (Chapters 2 and 3), the highly-motivated men and women of the missionary experience in Russia (Chapters 6 and 7) as well as many Mennonite Brethren missionaries from America rank among the great heroes of faith. Their vision for the lost world, their commitment to serve God and humanity, and their sacrificial

dedication to the cause of mission are exemplary and admirable. They stand before the present generation as a "cloud of witnesses"--sometimes as exemplars, sometimes as victims. Yet they performed their ministry most effectively as "earthen vessels," not as "superior saints." They were always at their best when they walked as saints in sandals, deeply cognizant of the fact that the surpassing greatness of the servants' power comes from God, not from within themselves.

Although I have made only incidental biographical reference to Mennonite Brethren missionaries, the context within which those comments occur should be adequate for the present generation not to duplicate the type of ministry, but to emulate the quality of commitment which their fathers and mothers demonstrated in Mennonite Brethren mission. This includes those who served under the Conference mission agency as well as those whose call took them the independent route of missionary witness.

Tensions of the Church in Mission

The Mennonite Brethren provide a good case study of the tensions between the ideal and the real. While they have theoretically--even theologically--expressed their self-understanding most eloquently as a corporate people in mission, the glue of that corporateness has not always held together without occasional fractures. There are numerous examples in Mennonite Brethren mission history where individuals, couples, and even groups of Mennonite Brethren church members found the Conference and its mission structures either too confining or too inflexible, or too cumbersome to carry out their call to mission; they moved ahead of the Conference. I have described selected cases in Chapter 12.

A review of the twenty-seven countries (with Angola, Canada, Portugal, and the United States) in which the Mennonite Brethren Conference is officially engaged in some form of mission ministry is quite revealing in terms of how

the work was actually started (Figure 20).[1] In Brazil, China, Colombia, and Zaire mission work was begun by individual Mennonite Brethren who were called by God and compelled by the Holy Spirit. Nothing could hold them back. The mission agency took over their work only after the fact. In places like Paraguay and Uruguay the Conference assumed some responsibility because Mennonite Brethren refugees needed assistance in missionary outreach. In countries like Austria, Germany, and Japan the Board of Foreign Missions took over the work which had been started by the Mennonite Central Committee. The Board of Missions and Services has (or until recently has had) personnel in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Botswana, Ecuador, Indonesia, Nepal, and Nigeria, but only as cooperative intermission ventures with no intent of planting Mennonite Brethren churches. This means that the Conference mission agency has started (or is starting) mission work as a pioneer venture only in seven of the twenty-seven countries in which it is active: India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Mexico, Portugal, Spain, and Panama.

The question of course was whether such projects as the South China Mission, or the Bololo and Kafumba Missions could legitimately be called Mennonite Brethren mission projects. Here was the focus of the tension. After all, the founders of these missions were loyal Mennonite Brethren who had their loyal supporters in the Mennonite Brethren churches. That explains why the Conference and its mission administrators

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[1] Although Figure 20 is part of the official record, it contains several inconsistencies. (a) The work in Zaire began in 1912 and was accepted as a Conference project in 1943; (b) the mission in Paraguay was started by the Mennonites there in 1935; (c) 1945 is not the year in which the Convention, Association, and Conference were organized in Brazil and Paraguay; (d) the item on China ignores Mennonite Brethren mission work there from 1911 (Conference took over in 1919) until Communist takeover; (e) Angola, Canada, Portugal, and the United States should be listed; (f) Pakistan was officially accepted by the Conference at the 1984 Convention in Reedley when Angola, Portugal, and Peru were also accepted as Mennonite Brethren mission fields with the objective of establishing Mennonite Brethren churches there.

	Country	When work began	We work in cooperation with	Type of work	Membership (approx.)	personnel at June 1/84	Needed
EUROPE	Austria	1951	Mennonite Brethren Conference of Austria	+ ■	254	6 M 6 GNC	2 GNC +
	Germany	1951	Mennonite Brethren Conference of Germany	+ ■	815	12 M 2 GNC	2 M +
	Spain	1976	Mennonite Brethren Church of Spain	+ ■	10	7 M 1 GNC	
	U.S.S.R.	1957	Mennonite Brethren Communications (Winnipeg) via radio	○	25.000	2 M	
ASIA	Afghanistan	1969	Internatinnal Assistance Mission	●		2 M	1 CS ●
	Bangladesh	1974	Mennonite Central Committee	●		1 M	
	India	1889	— Mennonite Brethren Conference of India — Trans World Radio — Evangelical Fellowship of India	+ ■	25.000 +	8 M 2 CS	
	Indonesia	1975	Muria Mennonite Synod	■		2 M	
	Japan	1950	Mennonite Brethren Conference of Japan	+ ■	1.400	9 M 2 MAP	4 M + 2 M ■
	Nepal	1968	The Evangelical Alliance Mission	●		2 M, 1 CS	
	Pakistan	1981	Missions Services	●	2 M, 1 CS	2 M	2 M +
	China	1982	China Educational Exchange	▼		2 MAP	2 MAP ▼
AFRICA	Botswana	1976	Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission	■		2 M	2 M ■
	Nigeria		Sudan Interior Mission	▼		1 M	
	Zaire	1920	Mennonite Brethren Conference of Zaire	▼ ■ ▲ ●	35.000	20 M 7 CS	4 M ■ 2 CS ▼ 1 CS ●
LATIN AMERICA	Brazil	1945	— Portuguese MB Convention — German MB Associaton	+ ■	1.500 1.600	13 M 4 GNC	4 M +
	Colombia	1945	Mennonite Brethren Conference of Columbia	+ ■	1.100	9 M 2 GNC	6 M +
	Ecudor	1953	HCJB. Gospel radio	○		3 M	
	Panama	1959	United Evangical Church of Panama	■ ●	500	2 M 3 CS	2 GNC +
	Paraguay	1945	Spanish and German-speaking Mennonite Brethren Conferences	+ ■	1200 (G) 900 (S)	8 M 3 GNC	2 GNC +
	Peru	1950	— Wycliffe Bible Translators — South America Mission — Swiss Indian Mission	● ■ ▲	700 (est.)	5 M 8 MAP	2 M ■ 1 CS ● 2 M ● 2 M ▲
	Mexico	1950	— Independent church — Missions Services	+ ■ ▼	85	7 M	2 M ▼ 2 M +
	Uruguay	1967	Mennonite Brethren Conference of Uruguay	+ ■	170	4 M, 2 FV	2 GNC

North America: 3 M (Sudan Interior Mission), 2 M (Missionary Aviation Fellowship).

+ Church planting-evangelism
■ Theological/leadership training
● Medical
▲ Agriculture/industrial development
▼ Education
○ Radio

M — Missionaries
GNC — Good News Corps
CS — Christian Services
FV — Fraternal Visitor
MAP — Missionary Assistance Program

Figure 20

Mennonite Brethren Mission Around the World

Source: GCY, 1984, p. 69, with slight adaptations.

spent endless hours in board meetings discussing the issue. Why did they not simply break all relationships with these independent Mennonite Brethren missions which emerged between 1910 and 1945? While there is no easy answer, one thing seems clear: Mennonite Brethren mission thinking has not been uniform and their actions have not always been united. In retrospect it seems that mission administrators of those years did not handle the tension as wisely and fraternally as they might have. At the same time, however, we pay tribute to them for being able to absorb the tension without permanent schismatic interferences.

Behind the Policies Stand Their Makers

In discussing mission structures (Chapter 9) and relationships (Chapter 12), it has become evident that mission policies may guide missionary action, but the makers of policies determine their application. It has been most revealing to discover that each of the four (five)[2] policy statements adopted by the Conference is a mirror of the philosophy and mode of operation of the General Secretary in office at the time.

It can be stated as a historical dictum: whenever the Conference has approved the appointment of a General Secretary for the mission secretariat, a new policy statement was sure to be forthcoming. The only exception was during the tenure of H. R. Wiens (1963-1968) whose term of service was terminated by illness. Of course, in drawing this conclusion one has to allow for a certain time lag between the time a mission executive took office and the time the new policy statement could be implemented.

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[2] As I have pointed out, there are four official policy documents adopted by the Conference: 1947, 1961, 1963, and 1977. The 1947 issue was nearly identical to a document of "Principles for the Extension of Mission Work" drafted by H. W. Lohrenz in 1942.

The Unfinished Agenda of Partnership

I have addressed the question of partnership as both a relational and a philosophical challenge (Chapter 9 and 13). The issue has received much attention ever since the revolutionary 1957 Convention in Yarrow. But the Brethren have come to no conclusive resolution. It appears to me that the reason for this unfinished agenda item is as obvious as it is unacknowledged by the Board of Missions and Services as well as by the mission administration. The root of the problem lies in the narrow understanding of the missionary task as Western missions, rather than world mission. The issue of moratorium of Western missions raised at the Lausanne Conference in 1974 has not yet been treated by the Mennonite Brethren in a serious way.

The question of internationalization of Mennonite Brethren mission has occasionally been raised, but with insufficient seriousness. Two problems lie at the heart of the matter, one constitutional, the other philosophical. (a) The 1981 Constitution defines the task of the Board of Missions and Services as foreign missions. (b) Such structural confinement is a philosophical reflection of a lingering geography syndrome and a fundamental misconception of the worldwide mission of the church.

Unless Mennonite Brethren mission leaders will give intentional heed to these underlying problems, "partnership in obedience" will reflect neither obedience nor partnership. Perhaps the projected 1988 consultation in Curitiba, Brazil, will intensify efforts to search for ways of true partnership in Mennonite Brethren world mission.

A Mission of Mennonite Brethren Theology

Although the Mennonite Brethren cannot claim an explicit theology of mission, they do have a sense for a Theologia en via, a theology en route. That is to say, that they have entered the stage of taking on a theologizing trait which I have discussed at some length (Chapters 1 and 13).

This stage is not altogether without hazards, however; it can easily lead to the loss of event-character which is the essential mark of a dynamic missionary movement.[3] When that is lost, the missionary vision will become foggy.

The theologizing trait, however, can also fulfill a prophetic role: it can and should take the place of a mission of theology. In other words, theology must assume a corrective role in mission; it must reflect critically and constructively on the mission of the church and, whenever necessary, call for mid-course corrections. This study has been an attempt to do just that for the Mennonite Brethren denomination as it enters its second century of mission--hopefully world mission.

Remaining Challenges

As the title of this chapter suggests, I can boldly claim some achievements through this study; I also humbly admit that I have not arrived. Neither the treatment of my subject nor the topics treated have been exhaustive. Therefore, I suggest a few areas for further study and reflection by simply listing them without a particular order of priority.

Motivation and Theology of World Mission

When I began to think about this project some six or seven years ago, I prepared three sets of questionnaires as research tools for soliciting responses from the global Mennonite Brethren Church. The first and longest was more general in content, but specific in its target. It addressed three groups of MB leaders: (a) nationals in India, Japan, and Panama; (b) American expatriates currently working in these three countries; and (c) mission executives who have been and still are the predominant policy makers of the sending churches of the West.

The purpose of this particular research instrument was

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[3] Cf. my discussion in Chapter 1, pp. 8-13.

(a) to ascertain whether an overall consensual mission concept could be gleaned from the responses; (b) to discover possible conceptual differences in the responses given by the three groups of respondents; and (c) to look at possible mission models that might emerge from the survey.

Much of Mennonite Brethren mission work in India was done during the colonial era prior to 1947, largely within a peasant society. In Japan, the Mennonite Brethren began work after World War II among an industrious people in an industrial, urban society. In Panama, all mission work has since its beginning in the late 1950s been among tribal peoples in a subsistence culture.

Has colonial mission work shaped the mission mentality of the Indian MB Church differently than the industrial model of Japan or the tribal model of Panama? What do the leaders of the various peoples and countries understand their roles in mission to be? In how far is their understanding different from that of the missionaries working among them, and from that of the mission executives directing the work from a distance? What conclusions can be reached that would impact--possibly correct--current approach and procedure of mission in these three countries?

The second and third sets of questions were less comprehensive in scope, rather general in their target, but more specific on content. The one contains twenty-five questions dealing with motivation in mission, and the other has ten questions about the current understanding of the essence of mission. These last two questionnaires were designed together with my student and research assistant, Johannes Reimer of West Germany, and in consultation with my colleague and predecessor, Professor Emeritus J. B. Toews of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California. The instruments were prepared simultaneously in English, German, and Spanish, and sent to Mennonite Brethren pastors and lay leaders in Anglo America, West Germany, and Paraguay. The purpose was to collect primary data on Mennonite Brethren mission thinking from people

representing a broad spectrum of ethnohistorical and socio-theological points of view on a set of questions that are precise and clearly focused on motive, theology, and strategy of mission at the dawn of millennium three.

In the process of my research, however, I soon discovered that the collected data from the questionnaires were so monumental in scope that the material could become a thesis project by itself. The subject deserves more attention and careful analysis than I could possibly have given to it in the context of this study.

The Crucial Issue of Internationalization

This is a most urgent question for Mennonite Brethren mission. Membership of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America is only about 30 percent of the global Mennonite Brethren fellowship. While such questions as how the American Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services might generate greater interest in foreign mission, recruit more missionaries for overseas assignments, collect increased amounts of funds to support the existing and newly created programs will remain crucial, there are questions even more crucial.

How can the Anglo American Mennonite Brethren minority within the global Mennonite Brethren fellowship learn to serve as a partner together with other Mennonite Brethren in world mission without feeling threatened to be outnumbered? Are they able to maintain a missionary dynamic even when they share mission leadership? How will they work in missionary teams composed of black and white and brown and yellow peoples from different countries? How will Mennonite Brethren from younger churches together with Mennonite Brethren from older churches learn to cross frontiers toward the unevangelized masses in the "globalopolises" of the urban world--in Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Europe?

Such are the questions which the Mennonite Brethren of the 1980s should ask in order to prepare themselves for bringing the saving message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the unevangelized masses of the world.

The Question of the Understanding of Mission

While this is not a new issue, and while I have sought to address it critically throughout my study, it remains a crucial topic for each generation to deal with. It is both a theological and philosophical question that penetrates to the very center and heart of mission.

The Mennonite Brethren debate about prioritizing proclamation over social service has resulted in little fruit. Should not the present generation ask the question about the centrality of evangelism in mission rather than about the priority of evangelism? The issue is not resolved by an "either-or" proposition. Evangelism deserves more than priority; it deserves centrality.

As long as the Mennonite Brethren will remain the church in mission, the task of critical reflection on that mission must continue to challenge each generation and each generation in mission must continue to challenge the church. I submit to the present generation this challenge: Allow the transforming gospel of Jesus Christ crucified and risen to be the heart of all worldwide endeavors between the times of his ascension and second coming.

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Auß Bundt, das ist etliche schöne Christenliche Lieder, wie die in der Gefängnuß zu Passau in dem Schloß von den Schweizer-Brüdern und andern rechtgläubigen Christen hin und her gedichtet worden. Basel: Jak. Heinr. von Mechel, 1838 (1564 reprint).

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